

# MILITARY NEEDS AND MILITARY POLICY



H. O. ARNOLD-FORSTER

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MILITARY NEEDS AND MILITARY POLICY

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# MILITARY NEEDS AND MILITARY POLICY

BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
H. O. ARNOLD-FORSTER, M.P.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
FIELD-MARSHAL EARL ROBERTS, V.C., K.G., etc.

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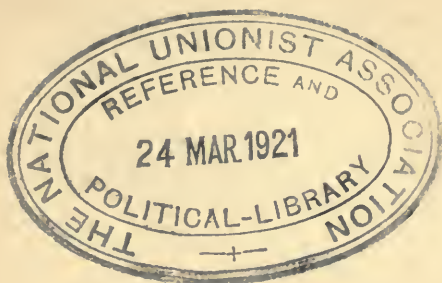
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## INTRODUCTION

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THE request to say a few words of introduction to Mr. Arnold-Forster's latest work on the all-important question of our military preparations is one to which I respond with pleasure. The greatest source of danger to this country lies in the extraordinary indifference of the rulers, in other words, the general public, to the problems of national defence. The tendency to forget the lessons of past events, as soon as those events are over, seems to be almost irresistible. Nothing apparently but absolute disaster is likely to cure us of the inveterate belief that somehow or other we are exempt from all the laws which have governed the rise and fall of nations, and can always rely upon some miraculous interposition of Providence to see us through the hour of danger. The whole mechanism of our public life tends, even in the case of those interested in military affairs, to an unconscious acquiescence in the plausible self-deception which persuades us that, if we can successfully carry out this or that particular scheme, devised with no regard to our strategical needs, we



have solved the problem of national defence and exorcised all dangers from our path.

It is these tendencies which Mr. Arnold-Forster has set himself to combat in the present work. Into the purely controversial issues raised in it I do not propose to enter. But I can wholly echo Mr. Arnold-Forster's insistence on the supreme importance of maintaining at the very highest standard both the strength and efficiency of our Regular Army. England may be an island, but the Empire is a Continental power with vast land frontiers in India and in Canada which have to be defended, and for the defence of which we must in the main look to the Regular Army. That the Regular Army should be strong in numbers and efficient in training, that it should be wholly available for its over-sea duties, and that it should be capable of great expansion in war, these, to my mind, are primary conditions the necessity for which cannot be too strongly insisted upon.

As to the question of the possibility of an invasion of this country, Mr. Arnold-Forster and I must agree to differ. But I am entirely at one with him in holding that an invading army of picked Continental troops cannot be repelled by a scratch force whose training and organisation are based, not on the principle of efficiency, but on that of individual convenience. Invasion must be met by a force systematically and adequately trained in all arms,

and led by officers in whom both their subordinates and their superiors can place implicit confidence. The question at issue is not whether the Territorial Army will attain the standard which Mr. Haldane has set before it, but whether it will fall short of the standard by which it will be measured on the field of battle. Amateur artillerymen may make remarkable progress in a fortnight, but the enemy's shrapnel makes no allowances. This, I apprehend, is the whole gist of Mr. Arnold-Forster's criticism, and for that reason this book is deserving of the careful consideration of all who are interested in the vital problem of national defence.

ROBERTS, F.M.

*19th December 1908.*



## PREFACE

IN submitting the present work to the judgment of the Public, some explanation of its purpose and arrangement is necessary.

Its purpose is to hasten, if may be, the awakening of the Nation from the hypnotic trance in which, as Lord Roberts has truly declared, it has been sunk during the last three years. Such a task is neither easy nor popular. The people of this country, as Lord Cromer has well said, have an almost infinite capacity for believing that to be true which they wish to be true; and anyone who endeavours to disturb the calm which is the natural and appropriate reward of indulgence in this habit, does so at his peril.

At the present time the majority of the people of this country have allowed themselves to be persuaded into the belief that the time and effort necessary to make a soldier, correspond exactly with the time and effort which an individual who has adopted some other vocation is able or disposed to give to military exercises, and to learning the

profession of arms. The belief, of course, is utterly absurd, and contrary to all reason and experience. Its absurdity would be recognised at once, if the theory which its acceptance involves were to be applied to the knowledge and practice of any profession in the world except that of soldiering. But on the acceptance of this gross and palpable fallacy the whole of our new military system depends. Considerable experience, however, has convinced the writer that anyone who ventures to call attention to this self-evident truth stands in danger of being regarded as a disturber of the peace, and a public enemy. Now, as in the days of Jeremiah, 'The prophets prophesy falsely . . . and the people love to have it so. And what shall be the end thereof?' There lies the peril. 'The people love to have it so.' But the duty of telling the truth, nevertheless, remains clear and certain. It is because I feel that the duty is paramount that this book has been written.

Whatever defects the work may have, and they are doubtless many and obvious, it, at any rate, has the merit of being sincere. For thirty years the author has been trying to understand what war means, and above all to realise what is the price which a nation has to pay for defeat. The study has been long, patient, and thorough, and the student has enjoyed, perhaps, some special advantages in pursuing it. It is what he has learnt that has nerved him to

protest against the policy of military make-believe which at this moment reigns with almost undisputed sway in this country.

For the individual who has had the temerity to challenge a policy which has been recommended with immense ability, and which has been received with almost universal acclamation, no consideration is asked. But for the arguments used and the facts cited by him I do ask very careful consideration. It matters little, indeed, it matters not at all, who says these things provided they be true. If they be true, beyond all shadow of doubt, they matter. I would, therefore, beg my readers to dissociate the merits or demerits of the writer from the merits or demerits of that which he has written.

I have endeavoured to make my propositions quite clear. They are either true or untrue, and it is the question of their truth or their untruth that I desire to submit to the judgment of my readers. If, after examining the evidence produced, they should come to the conclusion that the case is proved, their verdict must be of the highest importance.

For instance; if it be true that untrained troops have never held their own permanently against a Regular Army, the fact is of vital importance to us, who have decided to entrust our safety to untrained troops, and who have, at the same time, greatly diminished our Regular Army.

If it be true that for nearly a thousand years past all our fighting has been done across the sea, and never on our own soil, the fact is important, and the wisdom of the policy of spending many millions upon an untrained army tied to the soil of this country must be in doubt.

If, on the other hand, it be true that this country is liable to be invaded by a great military Power, the fact is important, and the argument that in order to resist such an invasion we must make the same kind of sacrifices which other nations have been compelled to make for a similar purpose, is entitled to great weight.

And the same observations apply to every one of the categorical propositions that are to be found in these pages. If the statements made be untrue, and if the evidence adduced in support of them be of no value, the propositions themselves are not worth a moment's consideration. But if the statements be true and the evidence unimpeachable, then the propositions advanced are undoubtedly important. I beg, therefore, that my readers will examine the statements, and sift the evidence with strict impartiality. But if they find the case proven, then I would most respectfully urge them to make their action correspond with their judgment.

In Part I of the book I have made some reference to what I have always believed to be an alternative policy to that which we have now adopted.



I have done so because I am confident that in some form or other that alternative policy must eventually be adopted. It may, indeed, be supplemented by the addition of a policy of compulsory service; but be that as it may, the question of the Regular Army, its Reserves and its Officers, must always remain paramount. It may be objected that the suggestion that there can ever be a return to the policy which was reversed in 1906 is presumptuous in view of the military support which we are told has been accorded with practical unanimity to the present system. On this question of military opinion, however, I must remain a sceptic. I am absolutely unable to believe that within the short space of six months the whole professional opinion of this country underwent a fundamental change; that it suddenly parted company with the military opinion of every other nation; and accepted as correct, and indeed as axiomatic, the exact contradictory of all that it had held to be essential up to the end of 1905. My own solution of the apparent anomaly does not involve the acceptance of a belief in this strange and sudden conversion. In the first place, I do not for a moment believe that military opinion in this country is in fact unanimous, or anything like unanimous, in its approval of the present military policy. Indeed, I imagine that, outside a small official coterie, it is not even considered necessary to express such a belief. But this is not all. There can be little doubt that most of the approval

that has been given by soldiers to the new policy, has been given subject to a very important reservation. Soldiers approve the policy not because they believe it is producing, or is capable of producing an effective war army; but because they believe that it can be made the stepping-stone to another and a very different policy, namely, Conscription, or Conscription under an alias. This attitude can scarcely be regarded as particularly honest, or particularly wise. It is not honest to mislead the people of this country by telling them that a certain set of measures is likely to render them secure in the event of war, when it would seem that many of those who use their great influence and high position to create this impression really mean something quite different from what their words and their conduct naturally imply, and are, in fact, doing their best to lead their country into an *impasse* from which, in their belief, there is only one exit. That the policy is unwise is evident. We are most successfully 'off with the old love,' but are so far from being 'on with the new,' that it is only with bated breath that we venture as yet to give any indication of the true state of our affections. Those soldiers who have used their influence to reduce and injure the Regular Army, to diminish the number of the Volunteers and to call them by another name, may, in the long run, get what they hope for, and what—to do them justice—most of them frankly

admit that they long for. But we have not got Conscription yet, and we have lost or are in the process of losing some 30,000 trained soldiers, and the whole of the Militia.

In Part III of the book I have dealt with what appears to me a very serious matter. Attention is there called to a number of instances in which Parliament and the public have undoubtedly been misled by the Secretary of State, or by those who have spoken on his behalf. These instances are cited, not in any spirit of foolish recrimination, nor with the object of raking up old errors made in good faith, but admitted and apologised for, and therefore best forgotten. As a matter of fact, the statements, whether made in good faith or not, have not been apologised for; and are not, and ought not to be forgotten. It is indeed an important part of the case which I wish to present to my readers, that during the last three years the public has constantly been misled with regard to matters of the gravest importance, that statements made by the Secretary of State were inaccurate and misleading, and did in fact mislead many; and that, in consequence, acts have been permitted, approved, or condoned, which would never have been tolerated had they been seen in the clear white light of truth. This may seem a hard saying, but I will ask my readers to be the judges as to whether or not it be justified. Nay, more, I will ask whether there are not some among them who

have themselves been misled. When the country was told that the Liberal Government had increased the Regular Army by 90,000 men, did no one believe it? And yet the statement was absolutely untrue. When the House of Commons was informed that the dismantling of the London forts was due to the enlightened perspicacity of the Secretary of State for War, did no one believe it? But the statement was untrue. When Parliament was informed that the Secretary of State had no intention of destroying Battalions of the Regular Army, and that he regarded such an idea as a preposterous folly, did no one believe him? And yet he did contemplate, and did perform, the very act which he disavowed. When the Secretary of State held up the performances of the Citizen Armies of France as furnishing an example for our imitation and guidance, did everyone realise that it was an example which could only be cited in order that we might the more carefully avoid following it? But it is unnecessary to multiply instances. These and many similar examples of the same evils are fully examined in Part III of this book. All I ask is that the case I have there endeavoured to establish may be fairly and impartially judged. If that case be proved, as I believe it to be, then indeed it is time that we should emerge from our hypnotic trance, that we should look facts in the face, and that we should at last begin to see things as they really are.

In conclusion, I desire to express my gratitude to Lord Roberts, who has done me the honour of contributing an introduction to this book. Lord Roberts has correctly interpreted and anticipated my earnest desire that he should not make himself responsible for the controversial portions of this work. That is a burden which must fall on my shoulders alone, and I am content now, as always, to bear it. But it is a great encouragement and stimulus to me to be able to print these kindly words from the Field Marshal. Lord Roberts has done more than any living man to make the people of this country realise that there is a danger, and that all is not well. His great name and fame have given weight to his words, and have made millions of men who never gave a thought to these matters before think about our military problem, and about the peril in which we stand. As one who shares to the full Lord Roberts's belief, and who, though far less competent to commend it to others, is not less sincere in his desire to impress his countrymen with the gravity of the situation, the author ventured to ask Lord Roberts for his assistance. The introduction to this volume is the kind and generous response to this request.

H. O. A.-F.

*January 1909.*



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PART I  
1905 AND 1909



# MILITARY NEEDS AND MILITARY POLICY

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

'It really would appear that all classes, in their desire to give Mr. Haldane fair play, and help him in the arduous task he has undertaken, have become hypnotised.'—*Lord Roberts (House of Lords, 23-11-08)*.

### THE OBJECT OF THIS BOOK

A FEW words of introduction are necessary to explain the origin and intention of the present work. A considerable portion of the book is composed of articles which appeared in the 'Standard' in October 1908. But large additions have been made to the original articles, some new subjects have been introduced, and others have received a fuller treatment than before.

It is the hope of the author that in the work as now revised and supplemented, the public may find a trustworthy and simple guide to the study of the all-important question of our military organisation.

No one is more fully aware than the writer that

the book must be, in one sense, ephemeral in character. It is not, and does not purport to be, a work dealing only with abstract propositions, propositions applicable with equal correctness to all military problems at all times. If it has any value, it is emphatically as a book of the hour. It would indeed be a calamity if it were to serve any other purpose. It is, and has been throughout, the contention of the author that our existing military system is not in conformity either with general military principles, or with the special military needs of this nation. The chapters which follow are intended to establish these propositions, and to make their truth apparent to non-professional readers. If the existing system is not, indeed, to be ephemeral, 'Heaven help the country.' But there is no need to take a gloomy view; on the contrary, there is much reason to believe that even now the public is beginning to recover from the hypnotic trance into which, as Lord Roberts has well said, it has been thrown by the deluge of eloquence to which it has been subjected by the Secretary of State for War.

It is in the hope that the facts stated and the arguments submitted in these pages may hasten the inevitable end that this book has been written. As soon as that end comes its work will have been completed, and its purpose fulfilled.

THE POLICY OF 'LETTING WELL ALONE'  
CONSIDERED

That there is a real danger of the hypnotised condition being continued long enough to involve the country in grave peril, is, alas! beyond dispute. Mr. Haldane is continually appealing to the public to leave things as they are, to refrain from criticism or interference, and to rest assured that time alone is needed to bring the seed which he has planted to maturity. The appeal is one which naturally commands the sympathy, if not the approval, of very many persons. It does seem hard to pull up the young plant to see how it is growing. But what if the plant be in truth a noxious weed? If that be so, then the old maxim that 'ill weeds grow apace' should stimulate our exertions, and nerve us to act while there is yet time. For, indeed, we have had some startling object-lessons in this country of the un wisdom of allowing plants to take root and to spread before we have made quite sure that they are likely to serve any beneficent purpose. The Volunteer Force was planted in 1859. It was not till 1903 that the Duke of Norfolk's Commission reported, without a dissentient voice, that the Volunteer Force was absolutely unfit to perform the only duty for which it could be supposed to exist, namely, that of meeting an enemy in the field. It is not well to make the same mistake twice.

Providence has been very good to us, but the old belief that it is not wise to 'tempt Providence' has been too often justified in the history of nations to permit us to disregard it. It is, therefore, the earnest hope of the author that this book may contribute in some degree towards the destruction of the present military policy of the War Office. Until that policy is frankly recognised as wrong and dangerous in the extreme, it will be impossible for the country to make a fresh start on more rational lines.

### THE WORK OF 1904-5

It may be said that an attitude of merely destructive criticism is, and always must be, sterile and reprehensible. A general statement of this kind, however, requires to be received with many qualifications. Responsibility rests with those who have power in a much greater degree than with those who have neither office nor authority. It is not incumbent upon every critic to become a creator, nor does the expression of a desire to destroy that which is obviously evil, impose the duty of finding a remedy for the evil.

But whatever may be the ethics of the abstract question, it is certain that in the particular instance now under consideration no such censure as that suggested above can justly be laid upon the author. That the system which has now been adopted is



mischievous and dangerous, he has always believed, and has in these pages endeavoured to prove. That there is another system which in its main principles is right, and applicable to the difficulties of our military situation, he has always maintained, and during the two short years when he himself possessed some power and responsibility, he did his best to explain the nature of that system, and to take the initial steps towards its establishment. What the author believed in 1905 he believes now. If any of his present readers desire to learn what was the nature of that system, and what were the reasons which underlay it, what were the objects sought, and how it was hoped to attain them, they will find the information set out in full detail in a work entitled 'The Army in 1906' (John Murray). In that book there is only one controversial chapter; and though every passage in that chapter which bore the character of a forecast or anticipation has been amply justified by what has since taken place, the reader to whom controversy of any kind is unwelcome may omit it without detriment to the arguments contained in the remainder of the work. Such as it is, the book can, at any rate, claim to be the outcome of many years' close study of a difficult problem, by a very diligent student whose opportunities have been in some respects exceptional.

At the time when the work appeared, much

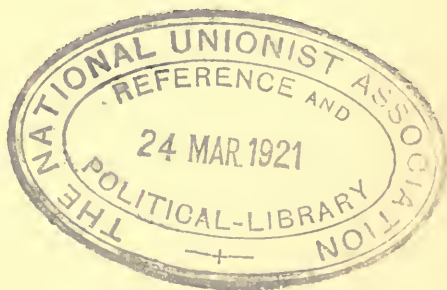
prejudice was, perhaps not unnaturally, imported into the discussion of proposals which were at variance with a scheme which had just been introduced under the most favourable auspices, and which had been guaranteed by its author to be a transcendent embodiment of wisdom and originality. Time has slightly diminished this first impression, and it is possible that the mood for impartial examination may ere long return.

It would naturally be gratifying to the author if such an examination were to be undertaken. It is no exaggeration to say that not one person out of a thousand who has condemned the policy of 1904-5 possesses, or has ever made the slightest attempt to acquire, any idea as to what that policy really was. It has always been part of the pose of the authors of our present policy, to represent themselves in the light of the 'saviours of society.' Whatever might be the merit of their proposals—and they occasionally went so far as to admit that they might possess some of those defects to which the works of mortals are liable—their acceptance, they declared, was a mere matter of duty in face of the fact that the Army was in a state of chaos, and our military system in a parlous condition. Now, it cannot be too clearly realised that this description of the Army in 1905 was supported on no basis of fact whatever, and was notoriously at variance with the plainest evidence.

When Mr. Haldane declared in 1906 that—

‘Never before this time have we had such good material in the Army. The moral both of officers and men is higher than it was. The Army is in a condition in which I do not think it has been before, both in point of quantity and quality,’

he was speaking the plain truth, and it is to be regretted that he has so often since that time lent his authority to the opposite contention, which had no merit save that it was necessary to the task of ‘forming public opinion’ and preparing the way for a policy of reversal and destruction. The facts are simple enough, and may be recapitulated in a single chapter.



## CHAPTER II

## THE ARMY IN 1905

**MENENIUS.** But reason with the fellow,  
Before you punish him, where he heard this :  
Lest you shall chance to whip your information,  
And beat the messenger who bids beware  
Of what is to be dreaded.'

*Coriolanus*, Act iv. sc. vi.

## THE WORK OF TWO YEARS

IN October 1905 the Regular Army on the British Establishment numbered 186,023.<sup>1</sup>

The difficulty caused by the three years' enlistments had been got over, and more than 200,000 Long Service men were in the ranks.

The shortage of officers in the Guards had been made up, and that in the Cavalry very nearly so. Concurrent Long and Short Service enlistment had been begun, and, despite the most persistent and melancholy prophecies of its certain failure, had proved an extraordinary success. The Cavalry had been remounted, and remount farms had been established.

The rearmament of the Artillery had been undertaken and the manufacture of a thousand new guns with limbers, wagons, and harness was nearing completion.

<sup>1</sup> It has now been reduced to 167,370.

A new and greatly improved type of barrack had been devised and approved; and arrangements had been made for erecting a building of the new type at Norwich on land generously presented by the citizens.<sup>1</sup>

Arrangements had been made, and money was available, for doubling the accommodation at Sandhurst.

The new medical establishment at Millbank had been designed and approved, and money appropriated to its construction.

The Reserve had greatly increased, and was increasing. The recommendations of the Esher Committee had, after immense labour, been translated into action, and the administrative arrangements of the Army remodelled in accordance with them.<sup>2</sup>

The Militia had not been dealt with, but if time had allowed, it would have been dealt with in the only way in which its existence could have been assured consistently with the welfare of the nation.

<sup>1</sup> This scheme has been knocked on the head, and the old insanitary barracks at Norwich, which were condemned in 1905, still remain.

<sup>2</sup> The author was not responsible for these recommendations, but only for seeing that they were faithfully carried out. The practical upshot of the Committee's work has been very small. It is probably true, however, to say that the interference of this outside Committee has not done any serious harm, and that in one or two particulars the changes recommended may have done some good. But generally speaking, it may be said, save for the changing of a great many names, the result is pretty much 'as you were.'

The Militia in November 1905 numbered 85,814 rank and file, or 15,000 more than the entire *establishment* of the Special Reserve which it is hoped may some day take its place.

The Yeomanry had increased to an unprecedented total in respect of numbers,<sup>1</sup> and was reported by every inspecting officer to be more efficient than at any previous date.

The Volunteers numbered 249,611 all ranks, or nearly 20,000 more than in the year preceding the war. The falling off in the number of officers, which had been continuous since the war, had practically ceased. Arrangements had been made with the Treasury, and publicly announced, whereby the sums payable for efficient Volunteers would have been increased; and the privilege of attending a fifteen days' camp, hitherto confined to certain special corps, extended to the whole Force.

175,000 men had attended camp within the year.

It will be admitted that this was not an unsatisfactory record for two years' work. The principal points of attack were :

1. The alleged intention to reduce the Volunteers. (There was no such intention, but that did not prevent the accusation being made.)

2. The alleged intention to destroy the Militia and to turn them into 'sham Regulars,' with a

<sup>1</sup> In peace time.



period of training (two years) which was declared to be utterly inadequate for the formation of a British soldier.

3. The insult to the Volunteers involved in a Medical Inspection, designed to ascertain whether men drawing pay for service were fit to serve.

4. The introduction of concurrent long and short service.

5. The fact that the Army Estimates, though greatly reduced, still reached £27,000,000.<sup>1</sup>

The irony of events is worth noticing. Since the new policy of 'Clear Thinking' was introduced amidst the acclamations of an admiring but bewildered public, ample opportunity has been given for a repudiation of the heresies of 1905. But what has happened?

1. The Volunteers have been reduced by 100,000 men.

2. The Militia has been wiped out of existence by statute, and the remnants of the Force have been deliberately turned into 'sham Regulars' with none of the attributes of the Regular soldier except the name. Six months' training has taken the place of two years'.

3. Medical inspection has—and most properly—been made a necessary incident of all enlistments into and transfers in the Territorial Army.

4. Concurrent enlistment for long and short

<sup>1</sup> Apart from non-recurrent expenditure.

service has been adopted at every depot throughout the United Kingdom.

5. The Army Estimates have not fallen below £27,000,000. But it must be admitted that if we do not spend less, we are at any rate getting a good deal less for what we spend.

It will be seen, therefore, that all the statements as to the unsatisfactory condition of the Army, and the alarm supposed to be caused by the dangerous intentions of the then Secretary of State, were pure inventions, created and repeated by politicians for political purposes, and which had no relation whatever to the facts. It must be admitted that they served their purpose at the time, but now that their crude falsity has been exposed, they need not further trouble us.



## CHAPTER III

## THE POLICY OF 1905 AND OF 1906 COMPARED

'Pyrrus answered one, who rejoiced with him for the victory they had wonne: "If we winne an other of the price," quod he, "we are utterly undone." For in dede then had he lost the most parte of his army he brought with him out of his realme: . . . and besides that, he had no meanes to supplie them with other.—*North's 'Plutarch.'*

The victory of the new policy has already cost the country 140,000 soldiers.<sup>1</sup>

## THE ORIGIN OF THE POLICY OF 1904-5

DESPITE the progress which was achieved during 1904-5, it would be absurd to pretend that the work which was initiated in 1904 was completed in 1905. It was, in fact, barely begun. In so far as can be judged by results, it stands the test well enough. But in 1906 everything that was sown in 1904-5 was torn up and trodden under foot in a craze for destruction.

And yet if anyone cares to examine the principles of the policy of 1904-5, he will see that they were

<sup>1</sup> Regular Army	.	.	.	.	18,653
Militia (net)	.	.	.	.	28,280
Volunteers	.	.	.	.	93,723
					<hr/>
					140,656
					<hr/>

reasonable, carefully thought out, and calculated to achieve their purpose. It is not surprising that this should have been so. It has been the fashion to represent those principles, and the methods by which it was sought to apply them, as the immature outcome of a hasty and wayward imagination ; a sort of fantasy sprung from the brain of an over-ambitious and ill-informed individual. Nothing, of course, can be further from the truth than this grotesque picture. Before the proposals of 1904 saw the light, the principal officers of the Army at home and abroad had been consulted and had replied in careful detail to a long series of questions addressed to them with the object of ascertaining their views as to the needs and deficiencies of the Army, and as to the character of the remedy required to supply those needs and to remove those deficiencies. The replies were practically unanimous, and it was on them that the policy of 1904-5 was based. That policy was directed towards the attainment of certain definite ends. Those ends are not the ends to which the policy of to-day is directed. Nevertheless, I believe that they still are the ends which we ought to seek ; nay more, I believe that ninety-nine soldiers out of a hundred hold that opinion.

#### THE OBJECTS AIMED AT

The policy of 1904-5 was intended to achieve the following objects :—

1. The establishment of a Long Service Army for the purpose of providing the garrison of India and performing the peace duties of the Empire; coupled with the establishment of a Short Service Army remaining at home in time of peace, and furnishing a great Reserve for the expansion of the Army in time of war. The men composing the Short Service Army to have a Colour Service of two years, i.e. the term of service advised by the soldiers and corresponding with that adopted by nearly all the great Military Powers.

2. The abolition of the Cardwell System in so far as it involved an equality in the number of battalions at home and abroad respectively.

3. The restoration of a solid nucleus of Long Service men.

4. The multiplication of Units, with its necessary consequence, a great increase in the number of Officers and N.C.O.'s, and an increased power of expansion in war.

5. The retention of the Militia with their Officers and Units, but with the added obligation of two years' Colour Service and liability for foreign service in time of war.

6. The employment as a matter of right, and in congenial work, of all Long Service soldiers discharged with a good character.

7. The expansion and localisation of the Army

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through the existing Territorial organisation of the Line and Militia.

8. An extension of the principle of the enlistment<sup>1</sup> of selected Volunteers into the First Class Army Reserve.

9. The creation of a real Striking Force of all arms, ready to take the field ; complete at a moment's notice and without waiting for mobilisation.<sup>1</sup>

Now, it is beyond dispute that all these things must be accomplished if we are ever to have the kind of Army which this country needs. Nor will the necessity be diminished when and if the nation decides that in addition to its Voluntary Regular Army, available for service abroad as well as at home, it must also have a conscript Army for home defence only. It is also to be noted, and the fact is very important, that while all the objects named above would naturally and inevitably have been achieved if the policy of 1904-5 had been adhered to ; they cannot, save to a very limited degree, be accomplished under our present system.

### WHAT THE PRESENT POLICY WILL NOT ACHIEVE

The present system does not, and never can, produce a large trained Reserve. It depends for its

<sup>1</sup> There were many subsidiary points in the scheme, and there were also some points of great importance, which, however, dealt with a temporary emergency only.

existence upon the maintenance of the Cardwell System in its most extreme and least useful form. An organisation which postulates a perpetual equilibrium between the number of battalions at home and abroad respectively, stands self-condemned. There never has been such an equilibrium save by an accident; there is no reason in the world why there should be; there are very many obvious reasons why there should not be; and if by some administrative trick an equilibrium be for a moment established, it is certain to be upset by the inevitable vicissitudes of our national policy.<sup>1</sup>

The present system does not and cannot produce an increased number of cadres. On the contrary, it has already destroyed nine battalions of Infantry, has placed thirty-three batteries of Artillery upon an establishment which will prevent their taking the field as units; and though the squads of recruits who are continually succeeding each other at the depots, and which are known as the 'Special Reserve,' are, by a polite fiction, invented like so many others to please the House of Commons, sometimes called 'Units,'

<sup>1</sup> The utter absurdity of the system can best be illustrated by an example. The 3rd Coldstream is at present in Egypt; when it is withdrawn, as in due course it must be, another battalion must take its place, thus destroying the equilibrium. The system will then demand that an additional battalion should be created at home; but no such battalion will be created. Again, if four more battalions are withdrawn from South Africa, it will be necessary, according to the system, to destroy them and four others, or eight battalions in all, to 'make the balance true.'

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every soldier knows that they are not and never can be anything of the kind. A mob of boys—half of whom on the outbreak of war are to be transferred to a strange battalion and placed under the command of officers and N.C.O.'s they have never seen, and the remainder of whom are to be turned into a sort of provisional battalion made up of the incapables of the Line battalion plus the incapables of the depot, a battalion commanded by a Lieutenant-Colonel of whom the men know nothing, and practically without officers—can, by no stretch of imagination, be described as a 'Unit.' It is nothing of the kind.

### RESERVE OFFICERS—BRITISH AND GERMAN

The new system will not increase the number of trained officers. Already it has greatly diminished the number, and, what is scarcely less important, has reduced the number of trained N.C.O.'s by hundreds. It is true that the Secretary of State has devoted much energy and eloquence to a scheme which is eventually to provide us with a number of officers to be drawn from the Universities and Public Schools. The number of the Reserve officers who will be obtained from these sources will never be large, and there is a real danger lest the attractions of this amateur soldiering may divert good men from the commissioned ranks of the Regular Army. But I have no desire to say a word against the policy of retaining the services of young men of the right sort who will be



available in time of war. It is a step in the right direction, but it is not a very long step. If, however, the public be led to believe that the attached amateur officer ever is, or ever can be, a substitute for or the equivalent of the professional officer who has served in peace time with the men whom he will lead in time of war, great mischief will be done. It is unlucky that in this matter, as in so many others, Mr. Haldane's passion for dragging Germany into his speeches has been purely mischievous. When the Secretary of State for War, in commending his amateur officers to the favourable attention of Parliament, thought it necessary to refer to the German practice as furnishing an analogy which encouraged him to proceed, he was either speaking of what he did not know, or was withholding from his hearers knowledge which he possessed. It may be a good thing to give commissions to young gentlemen who, after belonging to their School and University Corps, have been attached for three months to a Regular battalion to which they do not belong; but it is not a good thing to suggest to Parliament that the plan deserves commendation because it resembles the German practice.

What really happens in Germany is this: A young man, having passed his school leaving-examination with merit, and having been certified as physically and socially fit, is permitted to join the Army as a 'One Year Volunteer.' As such, he goes

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through the tremendous discipline of the German Army as a private soldier for one year. He has no privileges save that he is permitted to live out of barracks and to wear a white braid on his collar. At the end of the first year, if again reported upon favourably, he is permitted to serve twelve months as a junior officer in a German regiment. He is then finally transferred to the Reserve as a subaltern, and is called out every year for training and manœuvres with his regiment. And at the present moment complaints are to be found in the German military papers to the effect that officers so trained are not up to the required level.

It will be observed that whatever merit our system of creating amateur officers may possess, it is not due to its similarity to the German system; and it is a thousand pities that advantage was taken of the ignorance of the House of Commons to make such a suggestion.

### THE LACK OF A STRIKING FORCE

The present system does not and cannot provide a real striking force of all arms ready to take the field without waiting for mobilisation. This is a great defect. There is no reason whatever why the misfortunes of 1899 should not be repeated to-morrow. In 1899, when the invasion of Natal was imminent, and nothing but prompt action could save South Africa, we were unable to dispatch a single



Brigade from this country for several weeks. If there was one lesson which the war ought to have taught us with peculiar distinctness, it was the wisdom of creating a real Striking Force in time of peace. We have no such force; we are taking no practical steps to create one.

#### DISCHARGED SOLDIERS.—ENLISTMENTS INTO THE RESERVE

The present system makes no provision whatever for the employment of discharged Long Service soldiers of good character. The omission is a grave one.

The present system does, happily, continue the practice of enlisting men of the Territorial Force directly into the First Class Army Reserve.

#### CONCURRENT LONG AND SHORT SERVICE

The present system also recognises the truth for which the author contended so long, and for enunciating which he was so vigorously attacked—namely, that there must be *two Armies*, one composed of Long Service men, and charged with the performance of the garrison and police work of the Empire in time of peace; the other composed of Short Service men, serving at home in time of peace, but liable to serve abroad in time of war, and charged with the duty of creating a Reserve.

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It is well that this essential principle should have received recognition, however tardy.

### THE SPECIAL RESERVE

The Special Reserve is, of course, nothing more nor less than a Short Service Home Army, based upon the old Militia organisation, and is therefore, in theory, a correct and logical development of our military situation. Unluckily, in the form in which it actually exists, it is of little or no value.

In the first place, the period of Colour Service is too short. Nothing except a turn in the political machine has taken place since 1905 to alter the view unanimously expressed by every soldier in favour of two years' Colour Service as a minimum. Six months is not enough, as every soldier at the War Office knows perfectly well, and it is deplorable that, as Lord Roberts says, soldiers should

'apparently forget their well-founded and strongly-expressed convictions of only a few years ago, and should now seem prepared to trust the same stamp of soldier, whose unfitness for service in the field they then pointed out in no unmeasured terms.'

### WEAK UNITS

That the actual Colour Strength of the Unit at the depot which averages under a hundred men is far too low admits of no dispute. When the Colour Service has been increased to at least a year, and when the number of men with the Colours has been

raised to at least 500, the Special Reserve will become, what it is capable of becoming, a very valuable branch of the Army. At present it is a sham, and worse than useless.

This change will come in time, as will many others, all of which will be in the direction of a return to the policy of 1904-5.

### THE POLICY OF THE FUTURE

To effect this change will be the work of some future War Minister, who, if he be wise, will find new names for old things. The old principles will have to be adopted, not because they were at one time formulated by A, B, or C, but because they are essential and inevitable. It is to be hoped that the Minister to whom the duty falls will disarm prejudice and avoid criticism by such adjustments and modifications of forms and titles as will permit him to produce his scheme as an entirely new and original creation. The writer has seen enough of so-called military criticism in this country to feel assured that by so doing the Minister may secure the warmest approval for the very things which, under another name, were anathema.

Enough has now been said to clear the ground of some fallacies which tend to make a reasonable discussion of Army questions impossible. It has been shown that the impression which many interested persons have been diligently

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occupied in creating, to the effect that all military policy up to November 1905 was wrong and ineffectual, and that since that date we have been living under a new and almost inspired dispensation, cannot be accepted as an axiomatic truth. Having established this point we shall proceed to Part II of this book to examine in some detail the military policy to which the country has been committed, and to inquire whether that policy is, or ever can be, suited to the peculiar military needs of this country.

It is curious to observe that the military correspondent to the *Times*, who has been such a powerful defender of the new system, has now reconsidered his position, and has on many important points recommended a return to the position of 1905. He is now of opinion that—

1. Concurrent Long and Short Service enlistment (six years and three years) should be adopted, at any rate for the Artillery.
2. That the experiment of using 13,000 partially trained Militiamen in place of trained Artillerymen should be limited, with a view to its early abandonment.
3. That the 10,000 Infantrymen whom Mr. Haldane has got rid of should be replaced by 12,000 fresh men.
4. That the reduction of Artillerymen has been wrong, and that 5,000 men should be added to the Artillery. In other words, that Mr. Haldane's policy should be directly reversed.
5. That the period of training approved for the Territorial Force is altogether inadequate, and that any attempt to increase the training will destroy the Force.

The author naturally welcomes this valuable reinforcement of the views which he has attempted to express in the present work.

(See Col. A'Court Repington's lecture, delivered before the Aldershot Military Society, Jan. 27, 1909.)

PART II

OUR MILITARY NEEDS AND OUR  
MILITARY SYSTEM



## CHAPTER IV

PREPARATIONS FOR WAR—BRITISH AND  
FOREIGN

'Or the right way, or the wrong way, to its triumph or undoing.'

*Browning.*

## A LESSON FROM THE CONTINENT

IN the summer of 1908, following a practice which I have pursued almost without intermission for thirty years, I devoted a portion of my holiday to seeing something of the work of one of the great armies of the Continent. What I learnt in that year was but a continuation and a confirmation of the lessons which many previous years had taught me.

The lessons to be learned are numerous and varied. I shall not attempt to recapitulate them here. But the sum of all my observations leads me to one main conclusion, which is so definite and alarming that I desire to submit it to the earnest consideration of my countrymen. My conclusion is this :

Every country in Europe, save our own, to the best of its ability, and according to its lights, is preparing for the kind of war in which it has reason



to fear that it may some day be engaged. How complete, how scientific, how tremendous these preparations are, many Englishmen know very well ; but the majority of the people of this country are not so well informed. Happily for ourselves, we in England know nothing whatever of war as it really is ; and, as a natural consequence, we are unable to understand the frame of mind in which those who possess this sinister experience approach the problem of national defence. The result of our ignorance is curious ; at least, so it seems to one who has enjoyed somewhat special opportunities of studying both Continental methods and our own. It appears to me to be a fact beyond contradiction that, while foreign nations, without exception, are preparing for the wars in which they are likely to be engaged, we alone are doing nothing of the kind. Not only are we making no preparation for the kind of war in which all our experience tells us we are likely to be involved, but, with great diligence and an immense amount of talk, we are making what we are pleased to call preparations for a war in which in all human probability we never shall be engaged.

#### TRUTH AND ITS ENEMIES

The result is very serious ; so serious that, at the risk of incurring great disfavour on the part of those who hate to look unpleasant facts in the face, I shall do my best to tell the truth, and the whole



truth, about the military policy to which this country is being committed.

The task is not easy. It is difficult at the present time for any person to examine, still more to criticise, our military arrangements. For four years past an organised campaign has been in progress, the apparent object of which has been to befog and confuse the public, and to divert men's minds from the problem of defence, as a whole, to the contemplation of one subsidiary and not very important part of it. The praises of that excellent institution, the Territorial Army, have been sung in every key, the subject of the Regular Army has been systematically and effectively burked in Parliament and out of it. But this is by no means all. The *mot d'ordre* seems to have been given that every one who refuses to find merit in the official policy shall be denounced and attacked as a public enemy. Solemn wiggings have been administered by important personages to all and sundry who shall dare to criticise or even to question. Exalted names have been dragged into the service of the promoters, and it has been stated, almost in so many words, that for a civilian to doubt the virtue of the new scheme is to be guilty of *lèse-majesté*, and is a sign of malevolence and want of patriotism. A similar offence on the part of an officer is to be punished with expulsion from the Army. Our soldiers have been definitely told that praise and approval will be welcomed and rewarded. Those

whose conscience or whose military experience forbids them to offer this tribute have been bluntly told to hold their tongues or to take the consequences. And the outcome of this process is described as 'military opinion.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is not as widely known as it ought to be that during the last three years there has existed what, for want of a better name, may be called a 'Press Bureau' in connexion with the War Office. The individuals who compose it are well known to those who have been compelled to follow this curious campaign from its inception. They all alike draw their inspiration and their 'matter' from the War Office, or from some member of the Committee of Defence. While the methods of all of these gentlemen are much the same, they do not all bring the same skill to the task. To use a phrase which I believe is attributed to Douglas Jerrold, they 'all row in the same boat, but not with the same skulls.'

The existence of an 'officious' Press of this kind is of course much to be deprecated. A bad precedent has been created, and one which it is permissible to hope may not be followed. But to those who know something of the persons engaged, and of the methods employed, this strange campaign is not without its amusing side. If the public only knew the real origin of the innumerable panegyrics upon the new system which have appeared anonymously, or over some alias, in all sorts of strange places, they would smile at the trick that was being played upon them. If all these moving statements as to 'What the Army thinks,' 'What the soldier feels,' 'What universal experience teaches,' and so on, could appear over the signatures of A, B, C, D, or E, their true authors, they would receive, no doubt, the consideration to which the opinions of those gentlemen are entitled; but it would be an exaggeration to suggest that they would carry great weight. The manœuvres of a stage Army are familiar to us all, but a similar manœuvre in the literary world is not quite so easily recognised. When, therefore, a gentleman, anonymously or under an alias, contributes no less than five articles to as many different newspapers in a fortnight, each of them tempered to suit the style of the medium in which it appears, and all of them singing the praises of the latest War Office production, the public is naturally rather impressed by the strange agreement among so many different

But extravagances of this kind must in the long run defeat their own object. No self-respecting civilian is likely to be affected by menaces, and the Army suffers too much from the continuance of a sham to allow of its voice being permanently silenced. Officers who may expect to find themselves confronted with a real Army composed of men, and of trained men, will be the first to suffer from a system which will send them into action at the head of a tiny contingent largely composed of untrained boys. That much harm has been done by the system of

journals. Indeed, as Mr. Puff says in the *Critic*, 'When they do agree, their unanimity is wonderful.' But the wonder is slightly diminished when the facts are known. It is indeed almost pathetic to observe the industry and devotion with which the members of the band to which I have referred toil after their patrons; for during the last three years the War Office has had not one, but many plans, and many variants of each of those plans. All alike have won the enthusiastic admiration of these friendly commentators. The original proposition, its contrary and its contradictory, have all in turn been exhibited as masterpieces of originality and clear thinking. Indeed, the lightning changes of the War Office have sometimes been justified in advance of their publication by these intelligent critics. The War Office, like Mr. Vincent Crummies, must often have wondered 'how these things get into print.' But they do.

The upshot of all of which is that, while there is no reason whatever why gentlemen who take an interest in military matters should not obtain their information where they can, and make use of it as they please, there is a very strong public reason why a great Department should not enter into a journalistic campaign with the aid of a number of anonymous journalists however honourable and competent. And, lastly, it is of the greatest possible importance that the public should realise that a very great deal of what it reads with regard to the War Office is suspect, because it is the outcome of a systematic expression of official opinions through the illegitimate channels of anonymous journalism.

menace and cajolery which has been pursued cannot be denied, but its success will not be permanent. In the long run it will be found impossible to stifle free discussion and to prevent the plain statement of plain truths.

### FOREIGN METHODS

It is now time to return from our necessary digression to the main thesis of this chapter; that thesis can be best illustrated by concrete examples which everyone can understand and appreciate. Let me then be perfectly explicit. I have said that foreign nations are preparing for wars in which they think that they may someday be engaged; and that they are taking the most effective steps of which they are capable to ensure success in such wars should they, unhappily, take place. The French War Office has to contemplate the possibility of another German invasion; and the French frontier from Verdun to Belfort is elaborately defended and organised with the object of making such an invasion impossible. The preparation may prove to be inadequate; but it is in accordance with a consistent theory, it is scientific, it is appropriate. For its purpose it is the very best thing that French intelligence and French wealth combined can produce.

In the same way the German Army and Navy are perfectly organised for a great aggressive war. Very

likely no such war is in contemplation, but aggressive wars have always formed part of the Prussian system ; and when undertaken have always, hitherto, been successful, because the means were deliberately calculated to produce the ends desired.

#### BRITISH METHODS—NAVAL AND MILITARY

But when we come to our own country, what do we find ? We find, at least so far as one great branch of our defensive service is concerned, nothing even remotely resembling the German or the French method. The Navy, happily, is still organised with reasonable regard to the work it may have to do. The Admiralty, to my certain knowledge, have a theory, and a perfectly definite one, as to the functions which the Fleet ought to perform in time of war. Their whole efforts are devoted to the task of enabling the Fleet to perform that function successfully. I am aware that in the opinion of some critics the Admiralty are not doing enough to enable them to carry out their purpose. If the critics are right, the Admiralty are open to censure, and it is their plain duty to increase the Fleet until its power to achieve that purpose is beyond dispute. But no one even pretends that the Navy has not a definite rôle and a definite object. The stronger the Navy becomes, the more easily and the more certainly will it do what the country expects from it.

Now let us turn to the Army. How different is



the situation. Unless all the teaching of history be wrong and of no account, unless all military experience is to be disregarded as meaningless, we are not preparing for war at all. This allegation may seem at first sight to be an exaggeration. But a brief examination of our military position will suffice to show that it is a reasonable and moderate statement of an incontrovertible fact. Indeed, were it not that the British public is rarely willing to pay attention to two subjects at the same time, such an obvious truth would never have escaped attention. Unluckily the skilful manœuvres which have been resorted to with the object of diverting public attention from the Regular Army and concentrating it upon the Territorial Force have been successful. Parliament and the Press have been full of the Territorial Force. All the world has been writing about it, and making speeches about it. The sporting element, so dear to Englishmen, has entered into the discussion of the question. Sides have been formed. Half the Press and half the critics have declared that the required numbers will never be raised, and that the scheme will therefore be a failure. The other half have asserted with equal conviction that the numbers will be raised, and that when and because they have been raised, the success of the scheme will become thereby self-evident. Nobody has ever paused to ask whether, if the whole force were to be completed to-morrow down to the last drummer-boy, it would

be of any use whatever for the sole purpose for which it exists, namely, to win a victory for this country in any war in which the nation is likely to be engaged. There are hundreds of thousands of persons in this country who, if the Territorial Force reaches its establishment, will pronounce it a success, and who, if it falls short of that establishment, will, with equal confidence, pronounce it a failure. And yet, as will be demonstrated, the Force may be complete in every detail and still be an absolute and dangerous failure from the point of view of the national needs.

## CHAPTER V

## THE TERRITORIAL FORCE

'The old dog in a new doublet.'—*Lord Lansdowne (House of Lords, 26-6-07)*.

'First he were a Greyhound and his name were "*Fly*"; and then we docked his ears and tail and made a Mastiff on him, and now his name's "*LION*.'"—*Punch*.

## THE FORCE AND ITS FLATTERERS

IT is desirable to pause at this stage to say a word which ought not to be necessary, but which is necessary in view of the prejudice which the promoters of the Territorial Army scheme have endeavoured to create against all those who do not fall down and worship. I write as a well-wisher of the Territorial Army. That Force, which, of course, is only the Volunteers under another name, has many admirable qualities, and fulfils some useful purposes. There has been, and there always will be, an immense amount of exaggeration with regard to it; and the Force has, undoubtedly, suffered a good deal from the indiscriminating eulogy which some of its friends have thought fit to bestow upon it. We read glowing accounts of the performances of the troops at



manœuvres; we are invited to admire and wonder at the intelligence, discipline, and physique of officers and men. A great many of the things that are said are true, not of the Force as a whole, but of certain portions of it; and it is unfortunate that many commentators and eulogists fail to discriminate. Moreover, it is well to remember that what we are reading in 1909 is merely a reproduction of what we might have read, and what many of us did read, in every succeeding year since 1860. The address of the inspecting officer, informing the officers and men of a Volunteer battalion that their corps is the best he has ever seen, is a formula which has marked, and, be it said, disgraced, Volunteer inspections, ever since the creation of the Force. The flaming newspaper articles which have been inspired by each succeeding Volunteer review or Easter excursion for fifty years past are almost word for word the same as the accounts of the Territorial Force which we have all been reading during the past few months. There have, of course, been some very valuable and discriminating criticisms, in which full justice has been done to the many good qualities of the Force, but from which the ridiculous exaggeration which the public is supposed to like has been absent.

But enough of the inflated and ill-considered language to which reference has been made has found its way into the speeches of persons in

authority, and into the columns of the newspapers, to mislead many persons, and to induce the belief that some great and beneficial change has come over the Volunteer Force, which has entirely changed its character. There has been a change, and a change for the better. The creation of a brigade and divisional organisation, the addition of subsidiary services, such as the transport and ammunition columns, and, perhaps, more important than all, the abolition of the capitation grant, are all real reforms for which the Secretary of State and the Army Council are entitled to great credit. But no miracles have been performed, and there is no valid ground for supposing that the statement made by the Norfolk Commission with regard to the Volunteers, to the effect that—

‘taking the Force as a whole, neither the military nor the tactical training of the rank and file would enable it to face, with a prospect of success, the troops of a Continental Army,’ and that, ‘in view of the unequal military education of the officers, the limited training of the men, and the defects of equipment and organisation, the Volunteer Force is not qualified to take the field against a Regular Army,’

is susceptible of any serious modification at the present time. It is well, therefore, to keep cool when reading the glowing descriptions of to-day. They may be true and deserved, but they differ neither in form nor in degree from many other descriptions

which have preceded them, and which, beyond all doubt, were not true and were not deserved. Nothing but harm is done by these exaggerations.

When the public is told, as it was told not long ago, that the field batteries of the Territorial Force, after a period of drill averaging less than ten days for each man, had attained a condition of efficiency equal to that attained by batteries of Regular Artillery at the end of a year's continuous instruction, the result is purely mischievous. The actual statement was that—

‘in the opinion of a thoroughly competent observer, the London field batteries at the end of a fortnight reached about the same standard as the Regular batteries, formed at home during our last war, obtained after a year's work.’

To nine people out of ten such a statement could only have the meaning assigned to it above. It is possible, however, that the writer of the passage referred to may have intended to convey another meaning and to prove that hastily raised units cannot be made efficient. It is probably quite true to say that the new batteries raised in a hurry in 1900-1 were still below the mark at the end of a year, though it is probably a great exaggeration to say that they were no better than the Territorial batteries after ten days' instruction. But, if the contention be true, what is the moral? The moral is that, even with all the appliances available in a Regular battery, with

skilled professional officers and continuous work, a battery cannot be made efficient in a year. If that is the conclusion which it is sought to establish, it need only be said that it coincides exactly with the conclusion which has long since been arrived at by artillery officers in every army in the world, including our own; but as an argument in favour of creating 180 batteries, with a minimum training of fifteen days every second year, its relevance is not obvious.

If it be true that the work of one year's continuous training can be accomplished in a week, it is obvious that we are wasting enormous sums upon the Regular Army which ought instantly to be devoted to some other purpose. Soldiers do not take statements of the kind to which we have referred seriously; but civilians, who are entirely dependent upon the judgment of others, do believe what they are told, and are quite justified in doing so.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lord Lucas, at present Under-Secretary of State for War, and official head of the Territorial Force, has declared in the presence, and apparently with the approval, of the Secretary of State for War, that he could create an efficient Horse Artillery battery in a fortnight. But this is an exceptional case. Very few of our older officers are as highly gifted as the Under-Secretary of State. The country is fortunate in possessing such an accomplished official and such an admirable organiser.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE TERRITORIAL FORCE—(*continued*)

'The proposed National Army will be neither National nor an Army.'—*Manifesto of National Service League. (President, Lord Roberts, 8-4-07.)*

### THE LIMITATIONS OF THE FORCE

I AM well aware that in certain quarters the statement of the plain truth about the Territorial Army is greatly resented, and any one who ventures to tell it is in danger of being held up for condemnation as a narrow-minded and unsympathetic person, whose views are partly the outcome of prejudice and partly of ignorance. I do not think, however, that the party referred to includes the most sensible officers and men of the Force. It is composed, for the most part, of politicians and public speakers, who regard the Army as they do everything else: simply as the raw material from which the weapon of party polemics may be forged. It is necessary to point out what are the limitations of the Territorial Force, because these limitations are constantly ignored. War admits of no shams, and, if the truth be not

told in time of peace, it will be too late to discover it in time of war.

But it would be a grievous mistake to ignore or to fail to do justice to the real merits and the great qualities which the Volunteer Force possessed, and which it has retained under its new name. The Force undoubtedly contains within it the best military material which the nation possesses. On the whole, the *personnel* of the Force is not remarkable, but if it were possible to select from it at will, some thirty or forty thousand men could, in all probability, be found who, in the matter of intelligence and physique, would equal, if they did not excel, the best troops in Europe.

What is true of the Force as a whole is true also of the officers. The officers of the Territorial Force are at present, perhaps, its weakest point. It is inevitable that this should be so. A man who is compelled to devote the greater part of his time and energy to some civil calling must always be an amateur in regard to the military calling to which he can only devote his leisure. Nevertheless, the business training, the intelligence, and the zeal of many of the Volunteer officers are so great that hundreds of them have achieved a very high degree of proficiency. Given some experience of leading men, these officers would in a very short time become equal, if not superior, to the average officer of the Regular Army. It would be idle to pretend, how-



ever, that the majority of the officers of the Force possess these high qualifications. It is impossible that they should do so. The willingness of the men who compose the Territorial Force is remarkable and satisfactory. Within the limits of what is possible and compatible with their civil occupations, they are always prepared to perform their work with cheerfulness and good temper. It is true that in some respects the Force is very sensitive, and that apparently small causes will cause individuals or large bodies of men to withhold their attendance or even to leave the ranks. The consequent uncertainty is a great disadvantage from the military point of view, but it is a perfectly natural outcome of the conditions under which the Force serves. In the main, a Civilian Army must be governed by the affairs of civil life. That may be bad for the Army viewed as an instrument of war, but it is inevitable; and to blame the members of the Territorial Force for being what they are and must be, would be arrogant and unreasonable.

#### HONOUR WHERE HONOUR IS DUE

Of the excellent spirit which has been shown by the public bodies and individuals who have been called upon to create and administer the Territorial Army it is impossible to speak too highly. The work done or attempted by the Lords Lieutenant and by the county associations has been an example of



unselfish patriotism. The zeal which has been displayed is almost pathetic to witness. Despite the assurances of Ministers, despite the harangues of Mr. Murray Macdonald, M.P., and his friends, the conviction that all is not well, and that 'the country is in danger,' has become deeply rooted in the mind of almost every serious man and woman in this country. Everywhere there is a desire to help. The Government of the country, with great pomp and ceremony, has formulated a plan which it has declared to be essential to the safety and welfare of the State. It has invited the public to come forward and assist it in carrying out this plan. What can be more natural, what can be more creditable, than that every patriotic man and woman should respond to the appeal? There are at this moment thousands of men who are doing their very best to support the Territorial Force, not because they are convinced that it is the best and most scientific instrument for defending the country in time of war, but because a responsible Minister has told them that he requires their aid in the service of the nation. Most of those who have responded to the invitation have taken the word of the Minister as a sufficient guarantee for the value of the service. And who shall blame them? In any country in which preparation for war was the subject of scientific method, the judgment of the War Department would be accepted without demur, and rightly accepted.

Some there are, however, who are giving their service in doubt and with much misgiving. They know something of war, they know something of what real armies are, and their knowledge alarms them. Their case is truly a hard one. But, again, who shall blame them if, with doubting hearts, they perform the only service which it is open to them to render?

### FALSE GUIDES

But if nothing but honour and gratitude be due to those who, with no reward, and meeting with little encouragement, are doing what they believe to be the nation's work, what are we to say of those who have demanded their services and have framed their tasks? The answer must depend entirely upon the view we take of the value of the work which all these loyal and worthy helpers have been set to do. If the Territorial Army be the true solution of our military problem, if the safety of the country will really be secured when the Territorial Army realises the expectations of its creators, if all the energy and good will that are so lavishly offered bear fruit, then, indeed, no praise can be too great for a Minister and a Department who have thus utilised the best qualities of our people for the highest service of the State.

But what if the solution be no solution at all, what if the weapon we are forging with so much

care be one which will either rust for ever in its sheath, or which, if it be submitted to the clash of arms, will be shattered in our hand? In other words, what if all this zeal and good will have been diverted from the true service of the country in order to give a semblance of success to a scheme which has been framed without any regard for war, which conforms to no scientific principle, and which can produce no satisfactory result? To this last question the reader must supply his own answer. My part is simply to explain, and to provide the material for a judgment.

My own study of our problem of national defence has led me to the conclusion that our military needs are perfectly clear and definite; and that, under no conceivable circumstances, can the Territorial Force, as at present designed, satisfy those needs. I propose to set forth as clearly as I can the grounds for my belief. It will be for my readers to decide whether or not I have reason on my side.

## CHAPTER VII

## THE MILITARY NEEDS OF THE NATION

*'Who shall decide when doctors disagree?'*

## AGREEMENTS AND DIVERGENCES

LET us see what our needs are. When we are quite clear upon this point, it will be comparatively easy to form an opinion as to whether our present organisation is the one best fitted to meet those needs. It would be incorrect to say that there is absolute agreement as to what the real military needs of the nation are. On some points, indeed, there is practically no difference of opinion. Certain ground is common to all parties in the controversy which undoubtedly and unhappily exists; but outside this limited sphere of agreement there is much divergence of opinion; and of this divergence it will be necessary to say something.

It is a curious fact, however, that although there is a considerable difference of opinion as to the nature and extent of the dangers to be guarded against, there is, as far as I am aware, no party, no section which really favours the view that the dangers which

threaten us can be effectively guarded against by the means which we have chosen to adopt. This is a singular and disconcerting reflexion ; but anyone who will examine the situation dispassionately will be compelled to admit that it is just.

All parties are agreed in believing that this country may be involved in war oversea. Since the Battle of Hastings we have been almost continuously at war, and not once have we had to engage in a serious conflict on our own soil. (Civil wars, of course, do not come into the question.) If experience teaches us anything, it teaches us that in the future, as in the past, the fighting of the British Army will be done across the sea. We have had to save India once ; we may have to do so again. We have had to reinforce the action of the Fleet by military operations on the Continent of Europe, and we may have to do so again. We are bound by more than one Treaty to safeguard the neutrality of certain portions of Europe ; it is not inconceivable that we may be called upon to make good our obligations by force of arms. For any one of these purposes we must rely in the future, as we have done in the past, upon the Regular Army acting in conjunction with the Navy. On this point we are all agreed.

But directly we go one step farther we find ourselves face to face with a great difference of opinion. Some persons believe—and I admit that I am of the number—that, provided the Navy be maintained in

a proper state of efficiency, the danger of invasion is not one which need be contemplated; and that, if the Navy be not sufficient and efficient, no military precautions will prevail to preserve the country from a crushing disaster.

This view was expressed with great force by the late Under-Secretary of State for War, Lord Portsmouth.

‘He himself,’ he told his hearers, ‘had never said, nor would anyone outside a lunatic asylum suppose, that the Territorial Army would be equal to meeting unaided the trained and picked troops of the Great Powers of the Continent. If, however, we lost command of the sea, it would be quite unnecessary for any foreign Power with whom we were in conflict to invade us, for a people depending upon food supplies from abroad would very speedily be starved into a condition of submission.’<sup>1</sup>

There are others who hold that, although what is called an ‘invasion in force’ is not to be anticipated, attacks by a limited number of selected troops, arriving in ships which will have eluded the vigilance of the Fleet, may succeed in landing on our shores and doing great mischief. The party which believes in ‘raids’ of this kind is a considerable one, and the theory has at times received official recognition. It should be said, however, that there are also many persons who believe that the same considerations which apply to the case of invasion

<sup>1</sup> Speech at Lewes, 28th February 1908.



apply to the case of a raid, and who think that the true and only protection against a landing of any kind is the Navy. They do not all assume that the Navy is at the present moment adequate to afford the necessary protection, but they take the view that, if it be not strong enough, the proper course is to make it stronger, and not to spend money and energy upon the multiplication of land forces which will be more costly and less effective than destroyers and submarines.

It is not necessary for the purposes of the present argument to combat, or even to question, the correctness of the views of those who believe in invasion, or of those who limit their belief to the possibility of raids. It is not my object to take part in what bids fair to be an endless controversy, but to demonstrate that, while we at present fail to provide against the one danger as to the existence of which all parties are agreed, and are permitting incalculable injury to be inflicted upon the Regular Army, we are doing nothing whatever to cope with either of the two perils, about the existence of which there is, indeed, some doubt, but which a very large section of the community believes to be real and pressing.

#### THE POLICY OF THE ADMIRALTY

While, however, I propose to accept for the purposes of my argument two propositions which I believe to be unsustainable, and to assume that an



invasion of this country is possible, and that a raid is not only possible but probable, I think it just to point out that there is no evidence whatever that these views are accepted by the Government or by the Committee of Imperial Defence.

It is, of course, impossible for a private individual to speak with certainty upon either of these points, and the extraordinary want of harmony between the two great military departments makes it difficult to draw inferences based upon the action of either of them. It is, perhaps, not fully realised that, at the present moment, the Admiralty and the War Office are pursuing fundamentally different and contradictory policies. On the theory that no port will ever be attacked, that no troops will ever be landed, that no hostile shot will ever be fired upon British soil, the Admiralty have deliberately destroyed the elaborate and perfect system of mine defences constructed with admirable skill by the Royal Engineers. They have wholly or partially dismantled the few forts we possessed; they have allowed the land defences of the great naval ports to be abandoned. Many people still believe that Portsmouth, Plymouth, and Chatham are fortresses. It is a matter of everyday occurrence to see them so described in the newspapers. But they are nothing of the kind. There is not a gun or a round of ammunition in the whole of the landward forts, and the less said about some of the seaward forts the better. In other words, the

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Navy has definitely committed itself to the view that no landing is possible; that by naval means, and naval means alone, can an enemy be prevented from setting foot upon our shores. To do the Admiralty justice, they have been thorough and logical in the application of their theory. There have been no half-measures. The naval authorities have committed themselves absolutely to the proposition that no force can land. Their action makes this certain. If in the opinion of the Board of Admiralty there were the remotest chance of an armed force landing in the neighbourhood of our great naval ports, the policy they have followed and the attitude they have adopted towards General Owen's Committee would be almost criminal. If such a chance existed, the dismantling of the works which protect the naval ports was an act of insanity. But the Admiralty do not, it seems, believe in the possibility of a landing, and are acting in accordance with their belief.

### THE POLICY OF THE ARMY COUNCIL

Meanwhile, the Army Council, so far as they can be said to be proceeding on any definite line at all, are acting on the hypothesis that the Admiralty are entirely in the wrong. Our military policy not only does not harmonise with our naval policy, but is the direct contradiction of that policy. The Admiralty are positive that there will be no landing, and act accordingly. The Army Council are so certain there

will be a landing that they are spending £4,000,000 a year—not to prevent it, but to neutralise its effect after it has taken place. On this point there is no room for doubt. To enlist 300,000 men and boys who, in the event of war, are by the terms of their engagement, and by the law of the land, tied to the soil of these islands, would be a crazy performance if its authors did not assume that fighting in this country was not only possible, but probable. Evidently, therefore, the War Office believe the Admiralty to be wrong.

It cannot be said that the Army Council are as logical in giving effect to their opinion as the Board of Admiralty. On the contrary, beyond just doing enough to prove that they do believe in the need for a home-keeping Army, they are acting exactly as if they were in entire agreement with the naval authorities. This very important and interesting fact is as yet very little understood by the public. It is worth while making some attempt to make it clear and its significance apparent. The Army Council undoubtedly do believe in invasion, and do not believe that the Navy can protect our shores; but, despite their belief, they are taking no rational steps to safeguard the nation against the danger by which, in their opinion, it is threatened. For it should be clearly understood that, given the object in view, the steps which the Army Council are now taking are not rational at all; they correspond with no theory;

they satisfy no need; they furnish no guarantee whatever against defeat in war.

It is not to be wondered at that when those in authority act without principle, method, or consistency, the public, which naturally looks to its military officials for guidance, should be confused and bewildered. That the public is at the present time confused and bewildered is proved beyond all doubt by the fact that interest is entirely centred upon the Territorial Force, and that the official stratagem by which the attack on the Army and the destruction of the Militia have been concealed has been perfectly successful.

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE PROTECTION OF THE DOCKYARDS

'Populus vult decipi—et decipitur!' <sup>1</sup>

'The British House of Commons is infinitely unintelligent on points of detail of little or no difficulty. Men are like sheep, gregarious in their fallacies.'—*The Right Hon. R. B. Haldane* ('*Life of Adam Smith*').

## THE FACTS

IT is curious to note how uninstructed the public and a portion of the Press seem to be with respect to the question of the fortification of our great dockyards. The matter is one of much importance, and it is worth while devoting a chapter to the task of making it quite clear. This is the more necessary because the Secretary of State for War has done everything in his power to confuse and mislead the public and the House of Commons by the answers which he has thought fit to give to questions asked in Parliament.

At the present time Portsmouth, Plymouth, and Chatham are open towns. They have been so for several years past, but the fact does not seem to

<sup>1</sup> 'The public wants to be fooled—and gets what it wants.'

have been understood by the public. As stated by Mr. Haldane, in answer to a question put to him by Mr. W. Ashley, M.P., on the 26th October 1908, the fixed armaments of the landward forts surrounding the great dockyard towns have been removed. It is several years since the work of removal began. For a long time past the forts have been simply grass-covered inclosures, with nothing of a military character about them. As stated above, this fact does not seem to have dawned upon the public, for nothing is more common than to read in the newspapers references to the great *fortresses* of Portsmouth, Plymouth, and Chatham; or to the fact that the Volunteers, or the Territorials, as the case may be, have been told off to defend them in time of war.

### PRINCIPLES AND POLICY

Now it will be seen in a moment that the necessity for permanent works round a great dockyard depends solely upon the question of whether or not an attack upon the dockyard by a land force is anticipated. If no land attack is contemplated, the works are useless; if, on the other hand, it is believed that a serious land attack is possible, the need for fortifications of some kind becomes apparent. The last Administration was of opinion that the Navy could be relied upon to prevent a landing; and that being so, it was reasonable and logical not to rearm



or to modernise the forts. That the late Government did hold this view appears from the following question and answer :—

‘ Mr. Cox (L. Preston) asked the Secretary to the Admiralty whether his attention had been called to the evidence given before the Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers by the Director-General of Mobilisation and Military Intelligence, to the effect that it was the view of the Admiralty that the Navy could guarantee the complete protection of the United Kingdom against the danger of invasion by any larger force than 5,000 to 10,000 men;<sup>1</sup> whether this opinion attributed to the Admiralty by the Director-General of Mobilisation and Intelligence correctly expressed the views then held by the Admiralty; and whether the same views were still held ?

‘ Mr. E. Robertson (Dundee). The answer to the first two questions is in the affirmative, and as regards the third question, it is now being reconsidered by the light of the most recent information.’

It was in accordance with this policy that the Regular Army was strengthened, and its Reserve-making power increased; that a Bill was introduced rendering the Militia liable for foreign service in time of war; and that the offers made by Volunteer Officers to enlist their men for the Army Reserve were accepted.

But the present Government does not accept this policy. On the contrary, it has reduced the Regular Army, and has diminished its Reserve-

<sup>1</sup> The actual number was 5,000.



making power. It has decided to devote four or five millions a year to an Army whose sole duty is to fight in this country; and it has adopted the view that invasion is a danger which must be guarded against.

But if that be so, the present condition of the great dockyard towns is intolerable. It is admitted that they are open to attack, and no reasonable measures are being taken to defend them.

#### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The answers given by the Secretary of State to questions bearing upon this subject deserve close attention, for they show the deliberate manner in which the House of Commons and the public are trifled with and misled. On the 18th February 1908 the following question was addressed to Mr. Haldane by the present writer :—

‘Whether any, and if so, what, portion of the Territorial Force has been told off for the defence of the landward forts which formerly protected the dockyards at Portsmouth, Devonport, and Chatham; whether the troops so detailed comprise a force of Garrison Artillery; what is the strength of the Garrison Artillery to be employed; and whether he can state in what way the troops assigned to the defence of the forts are to perform their duty now that the whole of the guns and ammunition have been removed from the forts?’

The official answer was as follows :—

‘I am unable to furnish this information. The Right

Hon. gentleman must be aware that it is neither customary nor to the public interest to publish detailed information in regard to the works, armaments, and garrisons of the defended ports or fortresses at home or abroad.'

A further question and answer then followed which are thus reported :—

Mr. Arnold-Forster asked—

'Whether, in the opinion of the Army Council, a hostile landing in the neighbourhood of Chatham, Portsmouth, or Devonport is a contingency which must be contemplated and provided against ; whether, in the opinion of the Army Council, the danger to our great dockyards likely to result from such a landing has been diminished or increased by the removal of the whole of the guns and ammunition from the land defences of the ports in question ; and whether any other power which contemplates the landing of troops upon its shores, has added to the strength of its defences by removing their armaments ?'

Mr. Haldane—

'The present policy in regard to the landward defences of our naval ports was deliberately adopted, after full consideration, by the Government in power in 1900. The present Government does not propose in this respect to depart from the decision of its predecessors. It concurs in the policy adopted in 1900 and followed by every Secretary of State since then. The defence of our principal naval ports has been greatly strengthened by the substitution of modern movable armament for the obsolete guns which were discarded as a result of the report of Sir Robert Grant's Committee in 1900.'

Mr. Arnold-Forster—

‘May I infer that no question of invasion is anticipated by the present Government?’

Mr. Haldane—

‘Nothing of the sort.’

‘QUI TROMPE T’ON?’

Now it must be clearly understood that in giving these answers the Secretary of State was taking advantage of the ignorance of the House of Commons. A very brief examination will suffice to show that they are a compound of inaccuracy and absurdity which ought never to have been put into the mouth of a responsible Minister.

Let us take the first answer. The questioner is told with great solemnity that it ‘is neither customary nor to the public interest to publish detailed information in regard to the works, armaments, and garrisons of the defended ports or fortresses at home or abroad.’

As a matter of fact, no information about the works or armaments was asked for. As to the works, they are all marked on the Ordnance Map; and as to the armaments, Mr. Haldane only two or three days before had told the House that these do not exist. Indeed, this endeavour to make a mystery of the business is absurd. Everything concerning these forts has long been public property. Thousands of people

have lived in them, Volunteers, Cadet Corps, the Garrison Regiment. Anybody and everybody has been into them, and tens of thousands of people have seen them lying as destitute of defence as Battersea Park. To speak of Portsmouth, Plymouth, and Chatham as defended fortresses is a pure misdescription: they are nothing of the kind.

The attempt to make a mystery in respect to the garrisons is equally absurd. As Mr. Haldane himself was compelled to admit a few moments later, there is no secrecy at all about the troops who are told off to these particular places. Why the House of Commons should not be told that which is common knowledge to thousands of persons, it is not easy to understand. It is, however, most important that the House of Commons should realise that large numbers of Garrison Artillerymen are being assigned to so-called fortresses which have no guns and no ammunition. But perhaps the most serious part of the whole business is the statement put into Mr. Haldane’s mouth, apparently by some soldier, that—

‘The defence of our principal naval ports has been *greatly strengthened* by the substitution of modern movable armament for the obsolete guns which were removed as a result of Sir Robert Grant’s Committee in 1900.’

One is tempted to ask, ‘Qui trompe t’on?’ Whom is it intended to deceive?

## HOW TO 'STRENGTHEN' A FORTRESS

I will say nothing about this so-called 'movable armament,' though, as a matter of fact, there is not the slightest mystery about it. The description of it as 'modern' is rather a romantic one. I will content myself with expressing the hope that Mr. Haldane will invite members of the House of Commons to go down and see this armament for themselves, and to see it horsed and manned. They will then be able to form some idea as to the value of this particular equipment. But when Mr. Haldane asks us to believe that a fortress is *greatly strengthened* by the removal of its permanent armament, and the *substitution* of a movable armament, he is taking too great a liberty with his hearers.

Kiel, Wilhelmshaven, Cherbourg, and Toulon are all great naval arsenals; they are all great fortresses; they are all prepared to resist attack on the land side. I know all of these fortresses. I know that hundreds of thousands of pounds, probably millions, have been spent on the creation of a great cordon of forts and entrenched positions on the landward side of every one of them. I know that from time to time the design of the works and the guns mounted in the works have become obsolete. When this has taken place, the works have been improved and modernised, and the guns have been replaced by better ones. I know that in every one of these

fortresses, as in every real fortress, the fixed armament has been *supplemented* by a movable armament ; but I know of no fortress in the world outside Crazyland or the United Kingdom where the movable armament has been *substituted* for the fixed armament, or which has been *greatly strengthened* by taking out every heavy gun and every round of ammunition, and stabling a few dozen howitzers and field guns in the dismantled works.

The fact is that, in this, as in so many other instances, the present Army Council are proceeding without any method or principle at all. If it be assumed, as the present writer has always assumed, and as he was justified by the advice he received in assuming, that the Navy can prevent the landing of any serious force, the fortification of our great naval ports is superfluous, and therefore unnecessary. If, on the other hand, it be assumed that a landing is not only possible, but probable, then it is a crime to leave our great naval arsenals unprotected. There seems to be no limit to the demands which the Secretary of State is prepared to make upon the credulity of the House of Commons, but it would be interesting to hear some of the soldiers who, presumably, have advised him, defend the proposition which he has laid down. It is not true that a great fortress is strengthened by removing its armament. It is not true that a movable armament can be used as a *substitute* for a fixed one. It is not true that



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the movable armaments which are stored in the vicinity of our great naval dockyards are sufficient to guarantee them against a serious attack. And finally, it is not true that a partially trained Citizen Army, armed with a small number of moderately effective field guns and howitzers, can be relied upon to defend the perimeter of a great position against a resolute enemy, or to do, unaided, that which a regular garrison of trained troops in a scientifically fortified and entrenched position can barely accomplish.

In a word, if the Territorial Army is really to be used against an invading force on the soil of this country, we must reconsider the whole of our policy, and our great naval arsenals must be protected on the land side with all the appliances of modern science.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE PROTECTION OF THE DOCKYARDS— (continued)

#### ALWAYS USEFUL, SOMETIMES INDISPENSABLE

'Ceux qui proscrivent les lignes de circonvallation et tous les secours que l'art de l'ingénieur peut donner, se privent gratuitement d'une force et d'un moyen auxiliaire que ne sont jamais nuisibles, presque toujours utiles, et souvent indispensables.' — *Napoleon : 'Maximes'*

#### FORTIFICATION: ITS USE AND ABUSE

'A LITTLE learning is a dangerous thing,' and the proof of the adage is frequently to be found in discussions on the question of the protection of our great dockyards. Nothing is more common than to read fine passages in which the inability of fortified positions to arrest invasion or to decide the fate of a campaign is demonstrated, and many learned writers are laid under contribution in order to establish this somewhat doubtful point. But a moment's reflexion will show that all this learning is misplaced and misapplied. No one pretends that Portsmouth, Plymouth, and Chatham should be regarded as border fortresses, or as entrenched camps designed

to delay or frustrate an invasion. No one pretends that the successful defence of these places will protect the rest of the country in any direct fashion. All the theories as to the small value of fortresses in war may be true, and yet it may be necessary to protect the dockyards against a 'coup de main.' Spandau is fortified, not to prevent an enemy from penetrating into Prussia, but to protect the treasure which is stored in the fortress. We have an infinitely greater treasure stored in the dockyards at Chatham, Portsmouth, and Devonport.

If fifteen thousand trained troops could really be landed as a surprise on Hayling Island, at the back of Mount Batten, or between Reculvers and Garrison Point, humanly speaking nothing could save the dockyards at Portsmouth, Devonport, and Chatham respectively. I have seen such landings effected in the neighbourhood of Portsmouth with the greatest ease, and there is no doubt they can always be effected, if there be no naval opposition—an unthinkable contingency, but one which is postulated by the whole of our existing military arrangements.

It is idle to tell us, as a professional journal has lately done, that—

'in the considered opinion of the naval and military authorities, the present mobile defences are adequate'

to resist an attack in force, pressed home. No such hypothesis as the possibility of an attack of the kind

was admitted when the present conditions were established. It is suggested in the journal referred to that the Committee which dismantled the defences of our great dockyards was inspired by the recollection of a phrase attributed to Marshal Villars, who is supposed to have informed Louis XIV that—

‘it was not with the stones of his fortresses, nor the guns that crowned their ramparts, but with the hearts of his brave grenadiers, that he would protect the frontiers of France.’

Probably no General who ever commanded an Army was less entitled to make such a remark than Marshal Villars; and whatever may have been his promises, he proved singularly incapable of giving effect to them. But that by the way. It is, however, an injustice to the members of Sir Robert Grant’s Committee to suggest that they were animated by a motive so foolish and so irrelevant as that suggested. In all probability they adopted the common sense view that it is unnecessary to defend a place which cannot be attacked.

If, however, the members of Committee laid down the principle that an important and vulnerable position can be best defended against a serious attack by a small and imperfectly trained field force, and that permanent and armed entrenchments are of no value as a support to that Army, they were absolutely ignoring the opinion and the practice of every other military nation in the world.

## THE DILEMMA

One word must be said in conclusion with respect to this matter. The writer is sufficiently well acquainted with the careless methods of controversy and criticism which are considered legitimate in the discussion of military questions in this country, to be prepared for any kind of misconstruction. It would be in accordance with precedent that what has been said in this and the preceding chapter should be taken as the text for demonstrating that the author is a firm believer in invasion. It need hardly be said that nothing is farther from the truth. I do not believe, and never have believed, in invasion; I believe, as I always have done, that the true protection against a so-called raid is a strong Navy, and a highly organised system of maritime defence. But these are only personal opinions, shared, I know, by many, but not accepted by all. What I desire to demonstrate is, that to halt between two policies is folly. If we can be invaded we must accept the conclusion with all its consequences; we must as men of common sense place first and foremost the revision of our policy with respect to the defence of the dockyards, and we must effectively protect those national treasures from the danger by which in our opinion they are threatened.

## CHAPTER X

## THE QUESTION OF INVASION

## BED-ROCK FACT

'Let us start on the assumption that we are in earnest with this principle (that the Navy itself at its present strength is capable of defending us from invasion), and that it is now a continuous principle. It is the principle of the late Government; it is the principle of the Defence Committee; it is the principle of the Navy; it is the principle of the War Office and the Army Council; it is the principle of the present Government, just as it was the principle of the late Government. It is the accepted principle, and one in which the rule of clear thinking should apply. We have bed-rock fact here for the organisation of our defences.'—*Mr Haldane (House of Commons, 8-3-06).*

THE TRUTH, THE WHOLE TRUTH, AND NOTHING BUT  
THE TRUTH

'If our Navy defends our shores against invasion in strength, it follows that we do not require a vast array for home defence. If it does not, then the dissolution of the Empire is accomplished, no matter how many hundreds of thousands of men we may arm, nor how many guns of position may be trundling their slow length through "Peper Harow"<sup>1</sup> on their way to the Surrey Hills.'—*'Imperial Strategy,' by the Military Correspondent of the 'Times.'*

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<sup>1</sup> Peper Harow is the residence of Lord Midleton. Inasmuch as Lord Midleton has never given the slightest countenance to the policy of reducing the Regular Army, and creating an untrained force tied to the soil of this country to take its place, and has expressed his strong disapproval of such a policy, it would appear that this sarcasm has been posted to the wrong address. The rest of the sentiment, however, is unimpeachable, and might with advantage be inscribed in letters of gold in the Army Council Chamber.

## 'COMPLETELY DEFENDED BY THE FLEET'

'The British Army is unlike those of the Continent. We live on an island, and our coasts are completely defended by the Fleet.'—*Mr. Haldane (House of Commons, 8-3-06)*.

THE TERRITORIAL FORCE AS A PROTECTION  
AGAINST INVASION

LET us now examine the various dangers against which the nation is called upon to provide.

*The country may be invaded.* It has already been pointed out that such is not the official view; but it is undoubtedly the view of the majority of the people of this country. It is against an invasion that the Territorial Force is, in the opinion of many persons, intended to protect us. It is curious, however, to note that if this statement be categorically made, nine persons out of ten will promptly disavow it. Those who do so will admit at once that the Territorial Force cannot protect us from invasion. No one has spoken more strongly on this subject than the Secretary of State for War, who has told us that one-third of the so-called expeditionary force must be kept at home in the event of an oversea war, because the Territorial Force cannot be supposed to be ready for war, or competent to defeat a foreign army. The Secretary of State might, of course, have gone a great deal farther, and have confessed that if the Navy fails, neither the Regular Army nor the Territorial Force can save us. But it must be remembered that the Regular Army has a



great function to perform quite apart from the duty of resisting an invasion; the Territorial Force has none. If it does not exist for this purpose; or if, existing for this purpose, it is incapable of fulfilling it, it is obviously of no value whatever, and if we accept the view that the function of the Territorial Force is to protect us against invasion by a Continental army, that is the only conclusion at which it is possible to arrive. If this country cannot be invaded, a force whose sole function is to resist an invasion on the soil of the United Kingdom is absolutely useless, and the money spent on it is a sheer waste. If, on the other hand, an invasion be possible, how do we stand? If it be granted that one of the great military Powers of Europe—Germany, for instance—really can land its armies on these islands, it is not by means of such a force as the Territorial Army that we shall defeat the invaders. Germany has four million soldiers, grown men, who have practically all received a minimum training of two years under the most competent and scientific officers in the world. To defeat such a force as this we must do as other people do who have a similar object in view. We must make great sacrifices; we must enrol and train our entire population; we must increase tenfold the number of our professional officers; we must add to our *matériel*; we must create fortresses and prepare positions. But we are not doing any of these things; we have not the slightest



intention of doing any of them. On the contrary, we are contenting ourselves with a force which may some day reach, but is forbidden to exceed, 300,000 men, and which is at present more than 100,000 short of that number ;<sup>1</sup> a force largely composed of boys, and which, compared with a Continental army, has had no training at all.

Assuming that this little force can ever take the field, its numbers, after providing for the garrison of Ireland and the protection of certain fixed points, and after it has discarded all men who are disqualified by age, youth, infirmity, or occupation, will be insignificant. Nor, despite what some soldiers, who seem to have a passion for winning popularity by saying smooth things, are in the habit of telling us, will good intentions and patriotic zeal make up for all the other qualities which are necessary to secure success in the day of battle. Of course, I am well aware that there are a great many people in this country who cannot, and will not, believe this. They do not study military history, they are unacquainted with the military preparations of other nations, and they are pleased and inspirited by all the bustle and movement which have accompanied the operation of changing the name of the Volunteers.

Pages of the 'Gazette' are given up to recording the issue of new commissions, sonorous titles are conferred, decorations are invented and distributed

<sup>1</sup> In December 1908.

with a lavish hand, and everywhere we hear of divisions, brigades, batteries, regiments. It is all very splendid and very inspiring, but it is not war, nor, unless all the nations of Europe except ourselves are mad, is it anything like it. The sorrowful part of the business is that those who ought to be the foremost in telling the truth are in many cases the most ardent in encouraging the delusion. There are many soldiers in this country who know the truth perfectly well. Nay, more, there are many who, both officially and privately, have stated those truths with a force and conviction which are beyond criticism. But how rarely do we see any one of these experienced officers giving to the public the inestimable advantage of his knowledge? It need hardly be said that this reticence, whatever its cause, is greatly to be regretted, because it encourages and strengthens the belief of an uninstructed public in certain propositions, which are as unfounded as they are dangerous.

## CHAPTER XI

## THE VALUE OF UNTRAINED TROOPS IN WAR

'Avec les masses énormes qu'on met aujourd'hui en mouvement, l'improvisation ne donnera que des troupeaux d'hommes, et non pas des troupes. L'amateurisme sera toujours et forcément vaincu. Pour vaincre il faut une préparation longue et complète, et par conséquent des sacrifices.'—*Lt.-Colonel Frique, de l'artillerie française, breveté d'Etat Major.*

## AN ARMY FIGHTING IN ITS OWN COUNTRY

A VERY large number of persons in this country believe as an absolute matter of faith that *untrained troops*, provided they are animated by a proper spirit, *can be relied upon to meet and defeat Regular troops*; and that *an army fighting in its own country fights at a special advantage*. There is no foundation for either of these beliefs. On the contrary, they are opposed to all military teaching and experience. These two fallacies are so widely prevalent, and their acceptance as true is so great a danger to this country, that they deserve special notice.

It is not true that an army fighting in its own country fights at an advantage. As a matter of fact, it fights at a great and obvious disadvantage. A little reflexion will show that this must be so.

A British Army fighting on British soil must have lost one of the greatest assets an army can possess before it goes into action. It must fight as the army of a Power which has already suffered a humiliating defeat. The Navy must have been rendered impotent before invasion is possible. As Sir John French has well said—

‘Among the considerations which must greatly favour the invader from a moral point of view is the loss of the command of the sea, to which we have so long been accustomed, and the consequent consternation caused by the knowledge that invasion, which was always thought to be impossible, is, in reality, a *fait accompli*.’

But this is not all. Men fighting in their own country are necessarily embarrassed at every turn by the fear of injuring their own people and their own possessions. A foreign commander need have no scruple in burning villages, destroying bridges, and breaking up railways. The loss is not his. But with the native army matters are quite different. Those who command and compose it must naturally be reluctant to add to the miseries of the civil population, to destroy national and private property, and to inflict damage which will aggravate the penalties of defeat. It is evident, therefore, that the popular belief is unfounded, and that it is untrue to say that an army which fights in its own country fights at an advantage. The moral of which is that if we are really going to be invaded, the army on

which we must rely to resist invasion must be of a particularly high quality, in order to overcome the immense disadvantages under which it will take the field.

### CITIZEN SOLDIERS—THE BOERS IN WAR

Still more widespread and more dangerous than the delusion which has just been referred to is that other delusion upon which the whole basis of the Territorial Force rests, namely, the belief that untrained citizen troops can compensate for their want of military training by the excellence of their intentions and the warmth of their patriotic feelings. Unluckily, there exists a modern instance which is supposed to support this conclusion. The belief that the Boer War in some way contradicted the teaching of all military history in all time is firmly rooted in the minds of tens of thousands of the people of this country. It would be hard to find a more complete error in reasoning.

That in one sense the Boers were citizen soldiers, not fully trained in accordance with ordinary military practice, is true. But that they were untrained in respect of the work they had to do is not true. On the contrary, for that work they were, in many respects, specially qualified by the occupations of their lives. They had, for the most part, been accustomed from their youth upwards to ride, to

shoot at moving objects, to practise concealment, to bear exposure, to study country. All this experience was undoubtedly of great value to them in the field. When our citizen soldiers can claim to start with an equal measure of experience, they will be formidable foes by reason of it. But this fitness for war was not due to the fact that the Boers were citizen soldiers, but to the fact that, despite their being citizen soldiers, they had studied and practised many of those things which a trained soldier should know. As it was, they were still devoid of many qualities which a trained soldier should possess. Hence it came about that, as a rule, the Boers clung to the defensive; and that in resolute fighting, such as that which took place during the advance on Ladysmith, they were compelled to give way. But the main fact to remember is that the Boer plan of campaign would be absolutely impossible in a populous country. If we can imagine that, after the invader had occupied London, Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, and Glasgow, had taken possession of all our roads and railways, and was feeding all our wives and children in camps on Salisbury Plain, the Territorial Army was carrying on a dogged resistance in Caithness and Sligo, we should have a parallel to what took place in South Africa. But to draw the picture is to demonstrate the absurdity of the comparison.

The Germans had even greater difficulties with the Herreros than we experienced with our much



more formidable adversaries the Boers, but the German army marched to Paris in three months, and absolutely crushed every one of the citizen armies of France with a precision and rapidity which might teach us a lesson if we cared to learn.

The fact is, that patriotism and good intentions have never proved an adequate substitute for discipline, training, and organisation. Citizen armies have always gone down before regular trained troops. Every War Office in Europe knows this; and that is why each of them prepares for war in a manner as different from ours as it is possible to conceive. From all which it seems reasonable to conclude that, if this country be ever called upon to meet an invasion in force by a modern trained army, the Territorial Force cannot be relied upon to resist such an invasion with success.



## CHAPTER XII

## BLIND LEADERS OF THE BLIND

'It is impossible to estimate the value of Red Territorial Troops (Three Divisions) as compared with Blue Regulars, but it is not too much to assume that the military value of the whole of such troops employed in the Northern Theatre of War does not equal that of one Regular Division.'—*General Sir John French's Address to the Officers attending the Manœuvres in the Autumn of 1907.*

## HERZEGOVINA, SARAGOSSA

IT is not surprising that the unprofessional public should form incorrect ideas as to the value of untrained troops in war, for they are sometimes cruelly misled and deceived by those on whom they are entitled to rely for instruction and guidance. There lies before me the letter of a soldier who has not only served long in the Army, but who has held a high office in connexion with its administration.<sup>1</sup> The letter appeared in an important and widely-read newspaper. The object of the writer is to encourage the people of this country in the belief that untrained, or partially trained troops, fighting in their own country, have held their own

<sup>1</sup> General Sir Alfred Turner, K.C.B., formerly Director of Auxiliary Forces at the War Office.

in the past against the trained troops of a regular army, and may therefore be relied upon to do so in the future. The case, which is typical of the methods of a whole class of teachers who are ready to subordinate the lessons of history and the elementary truths of military science to the political exigencies of the hour, is worth quoting. As a proof of the correctness of his thesis, the writer of the statement referred to cites, in the first instance, the example of the Boer War, which has already been dealt with; he mentions the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Siege of Saragossa. With regard to the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is only necessary to point out that it is entirely irrelevant to the issue. The Austro-Hungarian troops had to contend with no army, regular or irregular. Their task was to effect the civil and military occupation of a mountainous country, nearly twenty thousand square miles in extent, against the wishes of a large part of the population. The process naturally took some time, and led to a number of small conflicts; but the issue was never in doubt for a moment, and the work was carried out completely and effectually.

The reference to Saragossa is a still more marked case of ignoring elementary facts. Saragossa was not defended by citizen soldiers at all, but by the inhabitants, men and women alike, who barricaded the narrow streets and shot the French soldiers out of the windows and from behind barricades.

There was, it is true, a force of 'half-trained levies' concerned in the operations. Under the command of Palafox this force left the city, attacked the French, and was promptly routed with great loss. The gallant defence of Saragossa by its civilian population had no influence whatever upon the course of the war. The siege was raised, but shortly afterwards the town was again invested and taken.

#### LOIGNY POUPRY AND BEAUNE LA ROLANDE

Finally, this would-be teacher cites an example which he appears to think is conclusive :

'I totally disagree,' says he, 'with Mr. Arnold-Forster and his views as to the value of a partially trained force. One has only to refer to the second portion of the Franco-German War, when raw levies, Artillery included, who had had but a few weeks' training and were to a great extent led by recruit officers, fought battles, such as those of Loigny Poupri and Beaune la Rolande. In fact, the situation of the Germans, who had the finest, best trained, and most victorious army of history, became highly critical more than once in consequence of these half-trained levies. Our Territorial Army would be a far higher trained force than the French army of 1871, after nearly the whole of the regular troops of France were captured or besieged.'

Now it cannot be denied that examples taken from the Franco-German War are relevant. In the later phases of that war large masses of partially trained troops, whose length of service at the time

when they came in contact with the enemy was for the most part greatly in excess of that which is demanded from our Territorial Army, were engaged in operations on a large scale. And what happened? At the battle of Beaune la Rolande the German Xth Corps numbered 9,000 men with 70 guns. The French XVIIth and XXth Corps had a strength of 60,000 men with 138 guns. The result of the action was as follows: the 9,000 Germans not only held their own, but drove the French off the battlefield with a loss to the latter of from eight to ten thousand men. At the battle of Loigny Poupry a German force of 34,000 men with 196 guns completely routed a French army of 93,000 men with 264 guns, the French losing 18,000 men and nine guns.

Such are the examples which this would-be teacher has selected for our encouragement. Comment is unnecessary. The whole story is told in a few words by the German General von Heinleth. Summing up the achievements of the gallant men who were sacrificed in a vain attempt to accomplish the impossible, that officer writes as follows:—

‘In these days the utmost was accomplished that can be expected from a popular rising of men who have received no military training. The road by which the result was arrived at was strewn with a hideous number of victims, who paid with their lives for the lack of political foresight of the rulers of France, and for their own opposition to universal military discipline in time of peace.’

I am not one of those who believe that the fate of this country will ever be decided upon the soil of this country; but to those who do believe it—and they are probably the majority of the people of these islands—the words above quoted convey a warning which cannot be misunderstood.

### THE TRUE TERRITORIAL FORCE OF THIS COUNTRY

But one word more remains to be said before we leave the subject of citizen soldiers and their value in war. I have spoken of the South African campaign, and have endeavoured to explain why, in my opinion, the part played by the Boers offers no encouragement to the view that we can safely rely upon an untrained though well-intentioned force in a life and death struggle with a Continental army. It is curious, however, that the one and obvious outlet for the volunteering spirit in this country which would give us a fighting force of immense value has never yet received the slightest attention from the authorities. We have in the United Kingdom an immense number of persons trained to the sea, who either for pleasure or profit have become 'professionals' of the highest order. The services of these men rightly utilised might be invaluable in time of war. For the Territorial soldier enlistment for service means the abandonment of the profession in which he has always been engaged, and from which

he can be ill spared; in order to enter upon another calling in which he must inevitably be but an amateur.

Very different is the position of the man trained to the sea. In the event of war with Germany, thousands of highly trained men—pilots, fishermen, yachtsmen, the officers and crews of cross-Channel packets, and longshoremen of every description—will be out of work till the war is over. Their ‘opposite numbers’ will, as a matter of course, be at the service of the German Admiralty. What can be more reasonable than to utilise this great weapon which lies ready to our hands? In destroyers, submarines, mine launches, and in the signalling and examination service these men, with a little training, would be invaluable. They know the coast, and they know the sea far better than the majority of the officers and seamen of the Navy. I have every reason to hope, I have some reason to believe, that ere long the Admiralty will take in hand the task of organising these men, and will for the first time create a ‘Territorial Force,’ not only admirable in quality, but perfectly adapted to serve the need of the nation in time of war.<sup>1</sup>

#### IF WE ARE INVADED

But, apart from this, if we turn from the question of how an invasion may be prevented, to the

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, page 239.



question of how an invasion once effected may be defeated, there is only one conclusion at which reasonable men can arrive. If we are really going to be invaded, we must do what other nations which are confronted by the same danger, are compelled to do. No miracles will be performed for the special benefit of this country. The nonsensical arrangement by which a time limit is imposed upon our enemies, and by which they are forbidden to attack for six calendar months, must be discarded. We must arm, we must train, we must prepare, and we must pay like other people. The man who believes in invasion believes in conscription; and if he be a man capable of thinking and reasoning he does not, and he cannot, believe in the policy which is destroying the Regular Army in order to create the Territorial Force.



## CHAPTER XIII

SOME SOLDIERS ON THE TRAINING OF THE  
SOLDIER

'Soldiers, apparently forgetting their well-founded and strongly expressed convictions of only a few years ago, seem now prepared to trust the same stamp of soldier whose unfitness for service in the field they then pointed out in no measured terms.'—*Field-Marshal Lord Roberts (House of Lords, 23-11-08)*.

## A STRANGE CASE OF MILITARY CONVERSION

I PROPOSE to devote the following chapter to recalling the publicly expressed opinions of some of our most experienced officers with respect to the period of training which is necessary to enable a soldier to take the field. The extracts are taken from the Report of the Royal Commission on the Auxiliary Forces, which sat in 1903. It will be observed that on one point every officer is agreed, namely, that two years' training is the *minimum* necessary to form the soldiers of an army which is to meet and to defeat foreign troops. It is only just to say that, until the commencement of the year 1906, every officer whose opinion was asked for or volunteered was consistent in upholding these views. It was on

the basis of the evidence given, and quoted below, and upon the advice of every one of his professional advisers, without distinction, that the present writer accepted two years as the minimum period for all troops likely to be engaged in war. What has taken place since 1906 to change the opinion of some British soldiers in high office is a secret which has never yet been revealed to the public. It is evident that the reason for the change is local and not general; otherwise soldiers in other countries would have hastened to adopt a principle which would more than treble the numbers of their armies and would relieve the individuals composing them of many months of distasteful and unnecessary soldiering.

It is sufficient to note here that the present members of the Army Council hold that those who gave evidence in 1903 were altogether wrong. Nay, more; it would seem that they condemn with equal unanimity the opinions which they themselves held and expressed as lately as 1905. The conversion is curious and interesting; it certainly had one advantage: it happened to coincide exactly with the official adoption of the political view which is always so popular, and which is, at the present moment, triumphant, namely, that the amount of military service an individual is able or disposed to give is the exact amount which is required to make him fit to serve his country in time of war.

*What Soldiers thought in 1903*

EVIDENCE OF LT.-GEN. SIR T. KELLY-KENNY  
(Adjutant-General of the Army)

621 Q. (Mr. Spenser Wilkinson). And you think that in order that the Militia and Volunteers should be up to concert pitch—I think that was the expression used—and be fit to meet trained troops abroad they should have two years' continuous service?

A. (Sir T. Kelly-Kenny). Yes; to meet European troops in the field, two years' training.

EVIDENCE OF FIELD-MARSHAL VISCOUNT  
WOLSELEY

1,529 Q. (Sir Coleridge Grove). I asked you to assume all through that the Auxiliary Forces have to fight without any substantial aid from the Regular troops?

A. (Lord Wolseley). *Then I think you had better make peace.*

1,530 Q. (Sir Coleridge Grove). Might it not be possible to bring them up into a condition in which they will be able to fight with reasonable prospect of success?

A. (Lord Wolseley). *Certainly, but then you would have to give them a corresponding amount of training to make them equal to the Regular soldier.*

1,531 Q. (Sir Coleridge Grove). That is exactly what I want to get at.

A. (Lord Wolseley). In other words, how long does it take to make a Regular soldier?

1,532 Q. (Sir Coleridge Grove). That is your way of putting it; I am asking you how long would it take to make 300,000 Auxiliary Forces equal to coping with 200,000 highly trained Regulars?

A. (Lord Wolseley). I think the best answer I can give you is the answer that a German officer would give you—what the Germans exact from their men before they turn them into the Reserve: *If you wish to have men capable of fighting as Regular soldiers, you have to train them as the Germans do, and keep them for eighteen months or two years and then turn them away, and have them up for periodical trainings annually. I look upon the German Army as very much in the condition to which you refer.* The great bulk of the German soldiers live in the Reserve, but before a man is discharged into the Reserve as an efficient soldier, he is kept permanently with the Colours for two years, and afterwards he comes up periodically for some small training. I cannot take a better illustration than what the German considers necessary.

EVIDENCE OF GENERAL SIR JOHN FRENCH  
(At present Inspector-General of the Army)

2,497 Q. (Sir Coleridge Grove). Now, I want to put this case to you—it is a contingency we have had placed before us—namely, that circumstances may arise under which the greater part of our Regular Army is absent from Great Britain, and that during that time we may be invaded, or may expect invasion. *Of course, any foreign Power that did invade us,*

*would invade us with its very best troops ; it would be sure to select these, you may take it for certain ?*

A. (Sir John French). *Yes.*

2,498 Q. (Sir Coleridge Grove). Would you be satisfied to meet those troops with our Auxiliary Forces after a year's training ; do you think that would be enough, or do you think it ought to be longer ?

A. (Sir John French). *I should think it would be very risky.*

Q. (Sir Coleridge Grove). *You would prefer not ?*

A. (Sir John French). *I should prefer not. I think it would be very risky.*

2,500 Q. (Sir Coleridge Grove). After what period do you think you would be satisfied to do so ?

A. (Sir John French). *A period that would make them equal to Regular troops.*

2,501 Q. (Sir Coleridge Grove). Do you or do you not think that the deficiency in training might be to some extent compensated for by superiority of numbers ; I mean, that if our Auxiliary Forces considerably outnumbered the invading Force, that (would make) up for their having a shorter period of training ?

A. (Sir John French). *Not under a year, I think.*

2,502 Q. (Sir Coleridge Grove). No, but allowing them a year's training ?

A. (Sir John French). *Allowing them a year, then probably superiority in numbers might tell. But there is no doubt about it that the factor of efficiency is far greater than that of numbers.*

EVIDENCE OF FIELD-MARSHAL H.R.H. THE  
DUKE OF CONNAUGHT

3,587 Q. (Earl of March). Supposing we had got into any other complications, and there had been any attempt to land troops in Ireland, what amount of confidence would your Royal Highness have felt at going into the field with Militiamen and Volunteers within *four months after they had been embodied*?

A. (Duke of Connaught). *Not very much, I am afraid*; I had a few Regulars and no Volunteers.

3,588 Q. (Earl of March). You would have felt very uncomfortable.

A. (Duke of Connaught). Very.

3,589 Q. (Earl of March). And after six months' embodiment you would have seen a great improvement?

A. (Duke of Connaught). Very great improvement; when I had regiments under me for a year or a year and a half, I gradually was training them up to the level of a Line battalion.

3,590 Q. (Earl of March). I suppose before the end of the longer training some of the regiments went through, you had Militia battalions very little inferior to Line ones?

A. (Duke of Connaught). Yes, very little, and I gave them exactly the same training as the Line battalions. I went through the whole thing from the company training and the battalion training, and I got them out in brigades; I had my signallers, and I taught them everything just the same as a Line



battalion. *That was after a year and a half, and we did all sorts of field practice and field firing.*

#### EVIDENCE OF GENERAL LORD METHUEN

22,151 Q. (Sir Coleridge Grove). Looking at it from that point of view, assuming that the nation would decide upon some form of compulsory military training, or compulsory service, do you still think that the difficulty of getting what I call these Home Defence troops up to a fairly good standard would be as great as you seem to consider it in your answers just now?

A. (Lord Methuen). That entirely depends upon the amount of training you give them. *For instance, if you were to take a certain number of men and train them steadily for two years and call them Militia, of course your Militia would be efficient; but I say, with existing circumstances, unless you give your Militiaman far more training than you do at present, and far more facility for shooting, he will not be able to face a Regular army. Of course, if you say I am going to take him for a whole year and give him just the same chance as the Regular troops will have, then you are making your Militia into Regular troops.*

#### EVIDENCE OF GENERAL SIR IAN HAMILTON

1,213 Q. (Sir R. Knox). But supposing they (the Militia) were trained on enlistment as recruits practically for five or six months, and then underwent subsequently their month's training in subsequent years, with their shooting training as well, do you

think they would want very much more to get them into condition for meeting a foreign army ?

A. (Sir Ian Hamilton). You propose to call them out for six months first of all, and then to give them their annual training ?

Q. (Sir R. Knox). Yes, I say six months, because six months is the utmost limit now put down in the Act of Parliament which governs them. A recruit on enlisting may be trained for six months ; his period of annual training is limited to two months ?

A. (Sir Ian Hamilton). It can only be a matter of opinion, but I would prefer to use them to relieve Regular troops in garrisons and coaling stations, rather than to rely upon them to take the field.

## CHAPTER XIV

## RAIDS

## AN 'UNSHAKEN DOCTRINE'

'The Right Hon. gentleman, the member for the City of London (Mr. Balfour), in a most powerful and instructive speech last summer laid down the doctrine that the Navy was adequate to protect these coasts except against raids, which could not, in his opinion, exceed 10,000 men, and were only to be feared at certain points. I do not think with my hon. and gallant friend, the member for Sheffield (Sir Howard Vincent), that anything has occurred in the recent manoeuvres to shake our confidence in that principle. The doctrine was the result of the most careful and scientific consideration to which the late Government devoted itself with the assistance of the most skilled experts, and it is a doctrine which, I believe, remains unshaken to-day; it is the foundation of our policy, and such raids must be met with good mobilisation schemes.'—*Mr. Haldane (House of Commons, 12-7-06).*

## THE ADMIRALTY VIEW

IT may be contended that if the Territorial Force cannot be relied upon to protect us against an invasion in force, it *will guarantee us against raids.*

Such is the statement which is often made, and often accepted by those who have not time or inclination to reason or to think.

The Territorial Force will guarantee us against raids. Will it? If this be so, it is curious that on

one has ever yet told us how it is to achieve that object. All the official statements with regard to the Territorial Force have been so loose and careless that it is difficult to define a 'raid' with any certainty that the definition will be accepted. We may take it, however, that by a 'raid' is meant a sudden and unexpected descent upon this country by a body of trained soldiers numbering from 5,000 to 25,000 men. Let us, at any rate, accept this definition, and see whither its acceptance leads us. It must be noted in passing that the Admiralty do not believe in the possibility of raids any more than they believe in the possibility of invasion.<sup>1</sup> The officials responsible for the Navy are convinced that the landing of 5,000 men can be prevented as surely as the landing of 500,000, and that it can be prevented by the Fleet and its auxiliaries on or under the water. It is well known that this is the view actually held and expressed by the Naval Intelligence Department. If it were not accepted, no condemnation could be too strong for that department. For there is not the slightest doubt that ever since the Admiralty forced the hand of General Owen's Committee, and insisted upon the dismantling of our

<sup>1</sup> There is some reason to believe that at the present instant (January 1909) the naval authorities incline to the view that one or more raiding expeditions not exceeding 10,000 men each may possibly, and under certain conditions, elude the vigilance of the Fleet. If this view be correct, the conclusions arrived at in this chapter are greatly strengthened.

coast fortifications, it has done everything in its power to deprive the Army of the means of defending our ports and estuaries.

### THE WAR OFFICE VIEW

But assuming once more that the Board of Admiralty are altogether wrong, and that the policy which has been accepted and acted upon by the Committee of Defence is a foolish and dangerous one, we come back again to the question of raids, the need for defining them, and the proper military means of guarding against them. Whatever else may be in doubt as to the exact meaning of a 'raid,' it is obvious that it must have certain attributes. A raid *must be sudden*, and must be *wholly unexpected*. However poor an opinion its military critics may have of the competence of the Admiralty, they will hardly allege that with adequate notice and time for preparation the British Navy cannot prevent the landing of 20,000 men upon our shores.

Being sudden and unexpected, a raid, to be successful, *must take place during the very first phase of a war*. If we are 'surprised' after we have been engaged in hostilities for six months it can only be said that we shall deserve to be. A raid must inevitably be undertaken by *a specially selected body of officers and men* who will represent the flower of the army from which they are chosen. The most skilful and accomplished officers, the most

highly trained and most efficient men, will be chosen. *The moment selected for landing will be that which is most inconvenient to ourselves and the most convenient to the enemy. The objective of the raiding expedition must be important, and must be reached with great rapidity.*

Such are the conditions under which the force by which we are supposed to be threatened must inevitably act. What is the proper military reply to a threat of this kind? Is it the Territorial Force or anything remotely resembling it? Common sense and the military authority of every nation in the world except our own combine to enforce an unhesitating negative.

#### LESSONS FROM THE CONTINENT

Much may be learnt from the practice of the great military Powers, who are undoubtedly exposed to the dangers which so greatly alarm some people in this country. It is impossible to fortify a long land frontier so closely as to make a surprise attack physically impossible. Between Russian Poland and Galicia there is no physical boundary at all. The crests of most of the passes in the Vosges are in the hands of the Germans. The principal German fortresses are on the eastern and not on the western side of Alsace-Lorraine. Hence Austria, France, and Germany have all taken special precautions to guard against raids. Those precautions have no resemblance



whatever to the precautions which our own War Office has approved. Galicia forms, as it were, a great glacis in front of the Carpathians. The Austro-Hungarian War Office does not rely for the protection of the frontier upon a small territorial militia trained for a couple of weeks annually, and scattered all over the empire from Bregenz to Hermanstadt. It has quite another system. It maintains in Galicia an immense mobilised force, chiefly composed of cavalry, and backed by the great entrenched camp of Cracow. I have seen these regiments. I believe that on mobilisation they require only one horse per regiment to enable them to take the field.

Not long ago I was permitted to visit the barracks of one of the French cavalry regiments which is kept mobilised in connexion with the defence of the eastern frontier of France. This regiment is nearly a thousand strong. Officers, men, and horses are all there, on the spot, and ready to march at a few hours' notice.

The Germans possess the strongest army in the world. In war time they can mobilise 4,000,000 soldiers; but, in view of their extended land frontier, they have thought it necessary to keep a certain portion of their army on what is practically a war footing in time of peace. At the present moment they are spending a million on one alone of their great border fortresses; and the troops in the Reichsland, drawn as they are from all parts of the empire, are specially

organised for the purpose of making any sudden incursion impossible. These troops are among the best and most highly trained which Germany possesses. They are provided with a complete and scientific organisation, and they are commanded by officers of the highest military experience.

It is possible that Germany, France, and Austria are all of them absolutely wrong; that the precautions they have taken against the danger which they apprehend are absurd and unnecessary. If they are wrong, then we may possibly be right, but not otherwise. But it must be quite clearly understood that our preparations against a raid, if they can be said to exist at all, differ *toto coelo* from those adopted by other nations. If the Territorial Army be really intended to protect us against raids, it is the most curiously unfit instrument which has ever been devised for such purpose; how unfit, the public of this country seems as yet hardly to have realised. It is, in truth, no exaggeration to say that, given the problem, there is no military man in the world, outside our own War Office, who would propound a solution even remotely resembling that which Lord Esher and Mr. Haldane have induced or compelled the nation to adopt.

### THE REAL WEAPON AGAINST A RAID

Let us consider for a moment what the problem is. The problem is to defeat a force of highly trained,

well-organised, and well-equipped regular troops, who, as the result of a surprise, have been landed upon our shores. The time chosen is the one most inconvenient to ourselves and most advantageous to our enemies. The objective is one of great importance, which must be reached without delay, and the attainment of which will inflict a deadly blow upon the Empire. If we once assume that a raid is to take place at all, such must be its inevitable characteristics. By what means can such an attack be met? What are the methods most appropriate to our end, which is the immediate defeat of the enemy? Common sense tells us quite plainly what should be their nature. The attack is sudden and unexpected; clearly, therefore, the force which is to resist it must be one that can move instantly, which need not wait for mobilisation, but is ready to take the field at twelve hours' notice. The hostile force being composed of picked men, very highly trained, and under carefully selected officers, the force which is to meet and beat it must be superior to it in numbers and at least equal to it in physique, discipline, and training. The whole purpose of the enemy being to strike a very heavy blow in a short time, the force which is to prevent it from striking that blow must be effective directly it takes the field; and, if possible, must be at or near the point at which the enemy is likely to strike.

With which of these necessary conditions does

the Territorial Force comply? The answer is that it complies with none of them.

### TRIED AND FOUND WANTING

*The Territorial Force is not ready*, and, by the very conditions of its existence, never can be ready in case of a surprise. Mr. Haldane has told us over and over again that the Territorial Force is to have, and must have, six months' continuous training before it has a chance of contending successfully with a disciplined army. He has never yet gone so far as to declare that at the end of six months it will be ready. But the essence of a raid is surprise, and, if we are surprised, how much training will our Territorial Force have had? The answer is: None at all. The force which is to meet and defeat the enemy must be able to march at twelve hours' notice. Yet everybody knows that there is not a regiment or a battery of the Territorial Army which can do anything of the kind. How long will it take to mobilise a brigade of artillery whose batteries are dispersed over a county, whose guns are distributed in half a dozen places, and which has no horses and no ammunition? As a precaution against a surprise attack such as that under consideration, the batteries of the Territorial Force may be regarded as non-existent.

The force which is required must be *more numerous than that of the enemy, and it must be of at least equal quality*. Nobody has the slightest idea as

to what the numbers of the Territorial Force are going to be, or what proportion of the nominal total will ever be available at any given time or place. But, assuming that enough persons can be got together to give us a superiority in numbers, what are we to say with regard to the other requirements: equality in training, in organisation, in physique, and in command? There can be only one answer to such a question, namely, that in respect to all these qualities the force which we can get together must inevitably be inferior to that of the enemy.

Lastly, the force required ought to be *available at or near the point which is likely to be threatened*. Is it likely that an army which is scattered over the whole of the United Kingdom, from John o' Groats to the Land's End, can comply with this important condition? The new organisation of the Volunteers is an undoubted improvement upon the old, but it is useless for the purpose of securing rapid mobilisation and immediate fitness for war.

In a world in which reason and method took the place of sentimentality and good intentions, the idea of creating such a force for the purpose of repelling raids would stand self-condemned by its own inherent absurdity. In this country, in which the sentimental and well-intentioned amateur rules unchecked, the plan appears to commend itself as sane and reasonable. But delusions of this kind perish at the first



touch of reality, and a week's war would teach us some terrible home truths.

It was in order to provide the weapon we really need that in 1904-5 provision was made for the creation of a mobilised force at Aldershot consisting of a division and a half (twelve battalions) of Infantry, with a corresponding force of other Arms. When completed this force would have numbered over 16,000 men, would have been complete in every detail, and ready to take the field without mobilisation at a moment's notice. The force would have been amply sufficient for the task which at that time the Committee of Imperial Defence was of opinion it might be called upon to perform. This plan, however, was, like nearly every other proposed by his predecessor, knocked on the head by Mr. Haldane, and no substitute whatever has been suggested. The need for such a force, which was painfully demonstrated in 1899, when it was found impossible to send a single brigade from home to Natal at the most critical moment of the war, still exists; the danger to which we were exposed in 1899 is certain to recur. But nothing whatever has been done to satisfy the need, or to guard against the danger.



## CHAPTER XV

## THE ARMY WE REQUIRE

'We mean business.'—*Mr. Haldane, Secretary of State for War, 1906.*

'There is no hard and fast compulsory attendance at camp for fifteen days. . . . No one will be fined for not attending for fifteen days, or even for not attending for a week, if he can show that it was not possible to do so without losing his employment, or for some equally good reason.'—*Mr. F. D. Acland, M.P., Financial Secretary to the War Office, June 1908.*

PERIOD OF SERVICE IN THE PRINCIPAL  
FOREIGN ARMIES

	WITH THE COLOURS	NUMBER OF SUBSEQUENT TRAININGS	TOTAL TERM OF SERVICE
Germany . . .	2 to 3 years	4 trainings	Up to the age of 45
France . . .	2 years	3 trainings	25 years from date of en- listment
Japan. . . .	3 years	2 trainings	Up to 40 years of age

## IS IT THE TERRITORIAL FORCE ?

IF, then, it be the case that the Territorial Force cannot protect us against invasion, and is the worst possible instrument for protecting us against raids, we are brought face to face once more with the question which few have sufficient courage to ask,

and which no responsible person, apparently, has the courage to answer—namely, ‘ For what purpose does the Territorial Force exist ? ’ It is indeed a difficult question to answer. The amazing half answers that are sometimes vouchsafed by those who have not time to think, or inclination to look facts in the face, do not really help us. Let all that is said in praise of the Territorial Force be frankly accepted—accepted in its most exaggerated form—and the true question still remains unanswered. Let it be frankly admitted that much admirable public spirit has been shown by everyone connected with the Force; by the Secretary of State, who has been so courageous and indefatigable in advocating its claims and in addressing its members; by the Lords Lieutenant and members of County Associations, who, in spite of inadequate funds and innumerable difficulties, have thrown themselves into the work with admirable energy and patriotism; by the officers, N.C.O.’s and men, who, in many instances, have made considerable sacrifices in order to comply with the requirements of the War Office. Let it be admitted that, although the Force contains tens of thousands of immature boys, it also contains some of the best military material which the country can produce. Let it be admitted that a week or ten days in camp furnishes an opportunity for healthy and pleasant exercise; and that drilling and manœuvring under some sort of discipline are incomparably better occupations

than looking on at football or loafing round a cricket-field. Let us admit that some day the Force may reach the same numbers as it had attained before its name was changed. Admitting all these things, how much nearer have we got to the real thing? *Have we got an army which will be capable of gaining the victory in any war in which this country is likely to be engaged?* The answer is that we have not; but that, on the contrary, we are spending £4,000,000 a year upon a Force which, despite the good will and the admirable intentions of all those who have to do with it, *is not the force which this country needs*, and is not the force which will save it from the dangers which undoubtedly threaten it.

#### ‘THE CONFIDENCE TRICK’

But it would be wrong to leave this branch of the subject without some reference to a view which, amazing as it may seem, is very widely held in this country, and which is frequently expressed by persons of intelligence, occupying responsible and important positions in society. There are many who, while they concede all that has been said in the preceding paragraphs, still approve of the policy which is being pursued by the War Office, because, in their opinion, the existence of the Territorial Force ‘creates a feeling of confidence,’ and gives people a sense of security which they would not otherwise possess. It may seem somewhat ridiculous to spend time upon

criticism of such a view as this. It would be ridiculous if it were not that the view is, in fact, entertained and acted upon by persons whom the public is accustomed to trust. It is sufficient to say that there is no essential difference whatever between the policy which is based upon this hypothesis and that which furnished the Chinese braves with devilish masks calculated to strike terror into the hearts of the enemy and to reassure the timid, who felt secure when guarded by such terrific champions. In war the only confidence which is of value is that which a General feels in the known excellence of the troops under his command, and that which soldiers repose in a leader whom they have learnt to trust. This confidence comes of knowledge, and if it does not it is misplaced and leads to disaster. Any man who consciously contributes to the deception of the public in regard to naval and military matters is committing a crime which nothing can palliate. If the people of this country are really lulled into a sense of security by their belief in the efficiency of defences which those who instruct them know to be inadequate, it is the duty of every honest man to take his share in the task of destroying the illusion and stating the plain, naked, unpalatable truth.

## CHAPTER XVI

## THE ATTACK ON THE REGULAR ARMY

## THE FIRST THING IS TO CUT DOWN THE REGULARS

The first step towards doing something effective for developing the national basis of the Army is to cut something off superfluous Regular Forces.'—*Mr. Haldane (Newcastle Liberal Club, 16-9-06).*

## THE REGULAR ARMY: ITS WORK AND ITS ENEMIES

IT will be observed that a considerable portion of what has been said with regard to the Territorial Force is a matter of controversy. It must be remembered that, while for the purposes of argument it has been assumed that the United Kingdom is exposed to the danger of an invasion in force, or of a raid, many persons do not accept either of these assumptions. There has been, and probably there will be for many years to come, a sharp difference of opinion upon this subject.

## COMMON GROUND

There is, however, one portion of our complicated military problem with regard to which there is practical unanimity. No party, no individual,

pretends that we can at present dispense with the Regular Army. A contention to that effect would, indeed, be absurd, for every page of our long history teaches us how dependent we are upon that valuable weapon. There is no need to embark on an historical disquisition in order to establish a fact which no serious man disputes. It would, nevertheless, be a great advantage if some of those who write in haste about our military needs could make a patient and impartial study of what the Regular Army has really done for us. In the course of that study they would learn that, save in civil wars, the work of the Army has always been done across the seas, and that the history of the Army, so far from being an unchequered record of success, displays, side by side, the record of splendid victories won against great odds, and of crushing and disastrous defeats which brought no glory to our arms, and which often gravely endangered the safety of the nation.

#### THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AND THE ARMY

The seeker after truth will also learn that, whereas the successes of the British Army have in the main been due to the skill of its commanders, or more often to the valour of its regimental officers and the men whom they led, the failures of the Army have been in almost every instance traceable



to the culpable neglect, ignorance, or stupidity of the authorities at home. Above all have they been due to the House of Commons, the persistent enemy of the Regular soldier, an enemy which has at all times proved more formidable than plague, pestilence and famine, and the bullets of a foreign foe combined.

It is important that these facts should be appreciated, for at this moment we are once more face to face with a violent Parliamentary attack upon the Army in time of peace. The blood-stained pages of our military history are before us to show what is likely to be the result in war of the policy of destruction carried on in peace.

#### THE ONLY ARMY WORTH MAINTAINING

It is to the policy of destroying the Regular Army that I desire to draw attention. It has been said that everybody is agreed that there must be a Regular Army. Everybody is also agreed in believing that that Army must, in so far as it is intended to serve abroad, be recruited by voluntary enlistment. I was about to add that everyone was agreed in thinking that the Regular Army must be of such a quality, and of such a numerical strength, that its success in any war in which it is likely to be engaged shall be reasonably probable. But this would be going farther than the facts warrant. It is a curious and disconcerting feature of the situation that many

persons seem to regard the Regular Army not merely as a necessary evil, which must be tolerated *pro forma*, but as an institution which may be maintained without the slightest reference to the work it has to do. This party is largely represented in the present House of Commons; its existence is a national danger, and those who compose it ought to be regarded as public enemies. To maintain no Army at all is, from the point of view of those who believe that there will be no more war, reasonable. But to maintain an Army which, on grounds of economy, is cut down to a point at which it ceases to be efficient, is to connive at the death of many brave men, and to imperil in the most direct fashion the existence of the Empire.

But if we are all agreed in thinking that the maintenance of the Regular Army is an imperative duty, it seems most unfortunate that public interest and attention should be diverted—as they have been diverted—from a subject the importance of which everybody recognises, to minor issues, which are not only highly controversial, but which are of infinitely less consequence to the nation.

It is possible that the expenditure of £4,000,000 a year upon a small localised Force may be a wise proceeding; but no one will deny that there is a great division of opinion as to the need for such a Force, as to its value in time of war, and as to the wisdom of spending so large a sum of money upon it.

But as to the necessity for maintaining the Regular Army in a condition of absolute efficiency there is, in theory, at any rate, very little difference of opinion. It is greatly to be regretted, therefore, that all those who desire to see the nation protected against a defeat in war cannot, or will not, combine to make the Regular Army as perfect as possible.

### THE POLICY OF DESTRUCTION

It is high time there was some such common action, for the Regular Army is going through deep waters. The South African War had many lessons for us, none of which do we appear to have learnt. The fact is all the more to be regretted because these lessons are also those which the study of modern war in every part of the world would have taught us equally well.

I have already pointed out that the principal lessons of the war were the need for a great trained Reserve for the Regular Army, and the danger of improvisation in the presence of the enemy. For the last three years we have been steadily destroying the Reserve-making power of the Army; and we have made it absolutely certain that, in the event of any serious conflict oversea, we shall have to set to work to improvise all over again.

But this is not all. A Return was issued in November 1908, on the motion of Lord Midleton,

which sets out in black and white the havoc which the Secretary of State for War has wrought in the ranks of our land forces.<sup>1</sup>

The Regular Army with the Colours has been reduced by 18,653 officers and men.<sup>2</sup> With the

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, p. 246.

<sup>2</sup> It is very important, however, to observe that this Report is absolutely wrong and misleading. The facts are not as stated, and the figures given are calculated to deceive. The tables show a reduction of the Regular Army by 18,653. This is correct, though, as has been pointed out, the reduction will eventually become greater than this. But the figures with regard to the Militia and the Volunteers have been falsified. The true figures were given by the Secretary of State himself as late as the 4th February 1908, in answer to questions by Captain Morrison Bell and Mr. Pease. Captain Morrison Bell asked the number of officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of the Volunteers on 1st October 1905, and of the Territorial Army in 1908, respectively.

Mr. Pease asked a similar question with regard to the Militia. The following table sets out the figures as given in the House of Commons and those contained in the Return :—

	Figures given by Mr. Haldane in the House of Commons	Figures appear- ing in the Return	Difference
Militia	85,814	82,883	2,931
Volunteers	241,347	219,351	21,996

In both cases the figures refer to N.C.O.'s and men only. The total error amounts to 24,927. In other words, the Special Reserve is not 23,349 less than the Militia, as the public has been informed, but 26,280 less, and this takes no account of a reduction of 5,336 men in the Reserve Division of the Militia.

Again, the true difference between the Volunteers in 1905 and 1908 respectively is not, as stated in the Return, 76,726, but 93,722.

It will be asked how it has come about that such a misstatement should have been made in a Return issued to Parliament and vouched for by the Under-Secretary of State. The only possible explanation seems to be that in order to make the actual reduction of our available troops appear smaller than it is, and thereby to conceal to some extent the breakdown of the new policy, an entire

consequent loss of Reservists, this will eventually mean a net loss of something like 30,000 men in time of war. Mr. Haldane told the House of Commons that he intended to destroy nothing save that which was useless for war. He has kept faith by destroying 7,253 of the Royal Artillery, including 1,811 of the Horse and Field Artillery, a battalion of the Guards with its large reserve, 1,331 of the Royal Engineers, and eight excellent battalions of the Line. There has been a temporary increase in the Reserve.

It will be observed that up to the 1st October 1908, the net result of the great reforms, of which the country has heard so much, is to reduce the number of men available in time of war by more than 100,000. The shortage would be far greater were it not for the increase of the Army Reserve. This increase, which is of great advantage to the

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Arm—namely, the Engineers—has been deliberately dropped out of the account without any sort of notice or explanation. The tables in the Return are headed 'Strength of the Militia' and 'Strength of the Volunteers' respectively in 1905. These figures have been quoted throughout the length and breadth of the land, and probably not one person in a hundred thousand has detected the trick by which the truth has been concealed. It is true that the Engineers have been abolished; destruction is the forte of the present Administration; but the fact remains that in 1905 there were 3,385 men serving in the Engineer Militia and R.A.M.C.; and 23,139 men in the Volunteers who did not belong to the Artillery or Infantry, and to whom no reference whatever is made in the Report supplied to the House of Lords. It will be observed, that, as has been so frequently pointed out, much caution is needed in dealing with the Returns which are nowadays presented to Parliament by the War Office.



Army, is in no sense due to the present policy of the War Office. On the contrary, it has taken place despite that policy. The increase is the result of the enlistment of a large number of men for three years' Colour Service between 1900 and 1904. These enlistments were sanctioned by Mr. Brodrick, now Lord Midleton. For reasons which have often been stated, and which are conclusive, three years' enlistment for the whole Army could not safely be continued. But it is to these enlistments that the great strength of the Army Reserve at the present time is wholly due. The policy now being pursued by the War Office must inevitably lead to a great and permanent *decrease* of the Reserve. In a very short time the Reserve will begin to shrink. The following table shows the number of men now in the Reserve who will complete their service in the named years.

Reservists leaving the Colours in the years 1908	
to 1911 inclusive . . . . .	51,435
Reservists leaving the Colours in the years 1911	
to 1914 inclusive . . . . .	24,139
Reservists leaving the Colours in the years 1915	
to 1916 inclusive . . . . .	16,492
Total . . . . .	<u>92,066</u>

It will not escape the observation of the careful reader, that in addition to the very heavy reduction of our admirable Garrison Artillery, the Royal Horse



and Field Artillery have been reduced by no less than 1,811 men already, and this despite the frequently repeated declarations of the Secretary of State for War that not a man of the Horse and Field Artillery had been reduced.

### THE MILITIA AND SPECIAL RESERVE

The Militia, which, with all its imperfections, could fight, and did fight, which had its own officers and N.C.O.'s, its ancient prestige and its organised units, has been destroyed. In its place we have that wretched imposture, the 'Special Reserve,' which, even if it ever attains its statutory maximum, will be 15,000 men fewer than the Militia it is supposed to replace. Scarcely 50 per cent. of the Force will be even nominally available in time of war. But far more serious than the lack of numbers is the lack of quality. It cannot be too clearly understood that Mr. Haldane has deliberately, and in time of peace, done that which Bonaparte, after fifteen years of war, was reluctantly compelled to sanction under pressure of continuous disaster, and of the absolute exhaustion of France. In 1813-14 the Emperor was forced to anticipate the conscription by three years, and to take boys of seventeen years of age into the ranks of his army. Mr. Haldane is at this moment doing exactly the same thing, and children are being taken from the streets to fill our battalions, and to become the first class

Reserve of the British Army. The whole question of the physique of the Army, especially of the Infantry, is indeed a very serious one. It must never be forgotten that whereas we enlist boys, all other nations enlist men. Those who have seen and compared the results of the two systems must sometimes tremble when they think what the consequences of our practice may be in time of war. In the Mutiny the Highlanders marched to Lucknow in their feather bonnets and stormed the Alumbagh when they got there. Is it quite certain that we have regiments which could do the same thing in our day? Possibly there are a few. It is to be hoped so, for the need for them may easily rise again. But the way to make such regiments is not to announce openly that the British Army is to be regarded as an annexe to the workhouse, into which boys of seventeen are to be invited 'during the winter months,' on the express assurance of the Army Council that they may 'buy themselves out' as soon as trade mends, and they can scrape together sixty shillings.

## CHAPTER XVII

THE ARMY, THE WORKHOUSE, AND THE  
ROYAL NAVY

'People are beginning to see that the career of the man who undertakes to die for his country if called on is a noble career, a career with high ideals, and one which if it is appreciated and if it is but given fair support and a fair chance, will raise him who has entered on it to a high position in the estimation of his fellow-countrymen.'—*Right Hon. R. B. Haldane (5-1-09)*.

'The question is whether the newly organised Special Reserve can be made use of to provide temporary employment during the winter months. . . .'—*War Office Advertisement for Recruits for the Regular Army, October 1908*.

## A WAR OFFICE CIRCULAR

IT is desirable that the people of this country should realise quite clearly what is being done in their name with regard to the matter referred to at the close of the last chapter, namely, the utilisation of the Army as a branch of the workhouse. The relevant facts are contained in a letter which the author contributed to the Press in October 1908. That letter is here reproduced, in the first place because it states the case with precision and accuracy; and in the second place because it has elicited from soldiers and sailors a measure of approval and acquiescence which has not surprised, but which has greatly gratified the writer.

LETTER CONTRIBUTED BY THE AUTHOR TO  
*The Standard* AND *The Morning Post* OF THE  
 28TH OCTOBER 1908

THE UNEMPLOYED AND THE SPECIAL  
 ARMY RESERVE

SIR,—Owing to the late hour at which I was compelled to speak last night it was quite impossible that any full report of what I said should have appeared in your columns. But the matter to which I referred is one of such great importance that, with your leave, I should like to say a word with regard to it in a form in which the facts are certain to reach the public. The matter to which I sought to call attention was the degrading advertisement setting out the advantages of the 'Special Reserve' which has just been issued by the Army Council.<sup>1</sup> At a time when the Regular Army is in course of reduction by 40,000 of its very best men, and in a year in which the Militia has been wantonly destroyed by Act of Parliament, it is most important that the prestige of the remnant which Mr. Haldane has left us should be preserved, and, if possible, enhanced. How ill this unfortunate circular is calculated to achieve this result will be evident as soon as its terms are examined.

In the bluntest terms the Army Council now announces that the British Army must be regarded as an annexe to the workhouse, a new 'casual ward' in which unemployed boys can find board and lodging during the winter months. That the Army is an institution whose sole purpose is to win the victory in war against a foreign enemy seems to have wholly escaped the attention of the Army Council. Recruits are now told that in every

<sup>1</sup> The circular will be found in the Appendix, page 254.

military depot throughout the country a bureau has been opened in which relief will be given to young men of seventeen who are suffering from the present trade depression or are likely to be out of work during the winter months owing to slackness of trade. To use the official phrase, 'The question is whether the newly organised Special Reserve can be made use of to provide temporary employment during the winter months.' Any pretence that the invitation is given for the benefit of the Army is frankly abandoned. It is feared that the unemployed boy may be deterred from applying for relief by the prospect of having to serve his country as a condition of so doing. The War Office is careful to remove his natural doubts. 'The question will be asked,' so runs the advertisement, 'for how long the recruit who takes advantage of these terms will be committed. The answer is for six years. . . . But a recruit in ordinary circumstances is allowed to purchase his discharge at any time for £3.' In other words, 'ne'er-do-weels' are implored to apply for Government relief at our military depots, with the positive assurance that as soon as they have scraped together £3 they will be free from the degrading incidence of military service, and will be able to go back to their own calling. The 'workhouse,' or I suppose I should say the regimental depot, is to feed, clothe, and house them until they have got together 60s., and then they can go.

Nor are the susceptibilities of the employer neglected. The employer may naturally think that if he allows a boy in his service to join the British Army he may possibly lose his services. But for him, too, the Army Council finds comfort. The boys are not going to be real soldiers at all. 'Employers of labour,' says the advertisement, 'may be afraid that their men may be taken away from them at a busy time and be called out for



annual training. This annual training, however, in the case of the Infantry lasts only for 21 days, while in the case of other corps it is only 15 days.' This is full of comfort. The employer who is foolish enough to suppose that the soldiers who are to meet the trained grown men of Continental armies—who, beginning at the age of twenty, have received a minimum training of two years, with a subsequent period of from 15 to 20 years in the Reserve—might possibly require to learn a little about their business, and even to see the officers and non-commissioned officers under whom they are to serve, has no idea of what the British War Office is capable. He need have no fear whatever; the whole thing is to be the merest playing at soldiers, and no human being is intended to take it seriously at any stage of the proceedings.

I submit that the whole of this circular is a grievous mistake. The War Office has no business whatever to come to the assistance of the Poor Law authorities in this manner. Already great mischief has been done in the direction of lowering the prestige and diminishing the popularity of the Regular Army, which, since the abolition of the Militia, is the only branch of our land forces which is likely to fire a shot in war. Batteries of the Royal Artillery have been sent on provincial tours, and instructed to 'perform' in our towns and villages, not for the purpose of adding a man to our Regular Artillery, but in order to strengthen that well-intentioned but perfectly useless force, the Artillery of the Territorial Army. And now we have the Special Reserve annexed for purely political purposes. Let it be remembered that the Special Reserve is an integral part of the Regular Army, and that the boys who compose it will, at the very outbreak of war, be drafted into the ranks of our fighting regiments, to bear the full brunt of the attack of a modern



Continental army. I have seen a great deal of Continental armies, and though I believe that British troops properly led, properly trained, and properly organised are capable of holding their own against any soldiers in the world, I absolutely decline to believe that we are giving our Army a fair chance if we treat it as Mr. Haldane is now treating it. Every officer and man in the British Army ought to be made to feel that when he puts on the uniform he is entering an honourable and distinguished profession. As the result of a policy which to me seems deplorable, we are now seeking to divert all popular interest, all popular enthusiasm, from the Army which fights, and has always fought, to the Army which, with all respect, never has fought, and in all human probability never will fight. And now we have this circular, which ought to have come from the Local Government Board, and not from the War Office, telling the world that the barracks of a British regiment are henceforward to be looked upon as a sort of enlargement of a stone-breaking yard, which a boy is advised to enter if he cannot find work on a crossing, but from which Mr. Haldane is careful to inform him he will be able to escape as soon as he has scraped together a sufficient number of shillings. This is not the way in which armies are made, and those who try to make them in this fashion deserve ill of their country.

Let me mention, in conclusion, that the suggestion that anything special is being done for the unemployed is a delusion and an imposture. Not a single man is to be raised or a farthing spent in excess of the Estimates voted for the year.—Yours, &c.,

H. O. ARNOLD-FORSTER.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *Oct. 27, 1908.*

GOOD ENOUGH FOR THE ARMY, NOT GOOD  
ENOUGH FOR THE NAVY

Mr. Haldane's plan of utilising the Army as a machine for giving outdoor relief is a profound mistake from every point of view. In the first place it undoes with a rude hand all that has been accomplished by those who sought to raise the prestige of the Army, and thereby to improve the quality of the private soldier. It is no exaggeration to say than if the First Lord of the Admiralty had dared to use the Royal Navy as an adjunct to the workhouse there would have been universal indignation throughout the Fleet. Nothing could exhibit the folly of the policy pursued by the Army Council in a more striking light than the actual practice of the Navy.

The Army Council will not get a boy more by 'cadging' round the workhouse gates than they would have got in the ordinary way. Anyone who knows anything of this country is aware that the way to make a privilege valued and sought after, is not to make it cheap. Every club, every society, every institution throughout the land will supply ample proof of this proposition. The Navy supplies it. The Navy is shut to all but the best. What is the result? Recruiting for the Navy was closed for last year, because all the recruits who were required had been obtained. It was not necessary to send invitations to the unemployed asking them to

help the Admiralty for six months by consuming rations at the public expense, and then leaving the Service. On the average, out of four candidates three are rejected. The best only are taken, and consequently the best are found to compete for what they know to be a privilege.

It is grievous to think that officers to whom the honour of the uniform and the credit of the Service are, and must be dear, should have thought it consistent with their duty to approve of the unfortunate advertisement which has been issued on behalf of the Poor Law authorities.

The advertisement is a mistake from another point of view. It is possible to get recruits after the fashion which has commended itself to the War Office ; but it is by no means certain that it is possible to get soldiers. A soldier, if he is to be of any value to his country, must be a man who is ready to face death, and to face it often in very terrible forms. The power to do this does not come with the putting on of a uniform. Men will face death for various motives. Probably the number who will face it solely because they are brave, and love fighting, is very small indeed. The power of discipline and of the habit which it begets is probably the most potent stimulus of all. Devotion to officers, perfect confidence in comrades, the fear of public opinion, the opinion of the regiment, of the Army, of men and women at home ; these too are influences which make

men stand still or go forward under fire. A highly exalted patriotism sometimes. Despair occasionally, anger occasionally, and very rarely want—all these again are powers that compel.

But on which of all these powers are we to rely in the case of boys or men who come into the Army for a few brief months, not because they want the Army, or because the Army wants them, but because they are told by a politician in a difficulty that if they come in for six months they will be fed and lodged, and that at the end of the six months they can pay 'smart money' and go on their way rejoicing, free of the taint of the King's Service?

That is not how soldiers are made.

Lastly, it is open to doubt whether anything in the nature of a trick is likely in the long run to help the Army. The Secretary of State, in words which admit of no misconstruction, tells intending recruits that they can get board and lodging free for six months, and that at the end of that time they can go free on payment of 60s.<sup>1</sup>

### A TRAP TO CATCH A PAUPER

But it seems that this is after all only a trap to catch the unwary. A zealous but not otherwise

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to observe that it will pay any benefit society to send its members into the Special Reserve for six months, and to lay by half-a-crown a week during that time. The society will save greatly by non-payment of full benefits, and the 60s. thus set aside will buy the member out handsomely at the end of the term.

apologist of the War Office has thought it necessary to rush into the field and to explain what the War Office really had up its sleeve.

'A recruit in ordinary circumstances is allowed to purchase his discharge at any time for £3.'

So runs the official advertisement.

'Oh, but,' says the War Office apologist, 'the Army Council does not really mean that; it means something quite different.'

Let the writer speak for himself.

'The further point that Mr. Arnold-Forster has attempted to score is that anyone of the Special Reserve will be able to buy out by "paying a few shillings."<sup>1</sup> *This entirely ignores the fact that none of the Reservists buy out, because if they did so they would lose the £4 paid to them in bounty, and would therefore be £7 out of pocket.*'

And so it appears that every one of the men and boys who have enlisted on the faith of the War Office advertisement has been misled. If the advertisement had run—

'A Reservist may buy his discharge at any time for £3, but he will be £7 out of pocket if he does so,'<sup>2</sup>

the statement, it seems, would have been true. It is a pity it was not made.

<sup>1</sup> This so-called quotation is not a quotation. The phrase used was 'until they have got together 60s.'

<sup>2</sup> *Westminster Gazette*, 9th October 1908.



## CHAPTER XVIII

UNIVERSAL TRAINING ; UNIVERSAL SERVICE ;  
AND CONSCRIPTION

## IS IT NECESSARY?

'For home service, no doubt, compulsion is admirable; but is it necessary? It certainly should not be necessary with the minimum of foresight and care on the part of the Government.'—*'Imperial Strategy,' by the Military Correspondent of 'The Times.'*

## AN IMPORTANT PROBLEM

I TRUST I have made it apparent that in my judgment the strengthening of the Regular Army, the enhancement of its prestige, and the increase of its Reserves are the paramount military needs of this country; and that the distinguished critic quoted above is perfectly right. But it would be foolish to ignore the fact that many persons who realise the danger in which the country stands, and whose opinions are entitled to the greatest possible respect, entertain the view that something more than the maintenance of a great Navy and of a highly efficient Regular Army capable of expansion in time of war, is necessary to safeguard the nation from defeat. As to the exact form which the supplementary organisation



should take there is no absolute agreement. Universal training, universal service, conscription, all have their advocates. It is true that the advocates of conscription under that name are not numerous. But though considerable ingenuity has been displayed in the endeavour to distinguish them, the essential difference between universal service under compulsion of law, and conscription, is not very apparent. But be that as it may, the advocates of one or other of the schemes referred to are influential, and, what is much more important, are thoroughly in earnest, and are seriously alarmed by the policy of military make-believe to which the country is now committed.

It would be a misfortune if every advantage were not taken of this zeal and public spirit. It is necessary to examine the proposals which have been made, and the examination may reveal unexpected difficulties which cannot be ignored. But, for the present writer at any rate, it is impossible to enter on such an examination save in the most sympathetic spirit, and with the earnest desire to find opportunities for agreement, rather than occasions for difference.

It is obvious, in the first place, that between those whose chief desire is to see the Regular Army rendered strong and efficient and those who desire universal training or universal service there is an intimate bond of union. Lord Roberts has said with perfect truth that neither universal training nor

universal service will absolve us from the need for maintaining an efficient Regular Army raised by voluntary enlistment. The fact is obvious, but it is too often forgotten or ignored. It is clear, therefore, that those who are advocating the claims of the Regular Army may look with confidence to the friends of compulsory training or compulsory service for their support. The institution of universal training may be important and urgent, but it cannot be as important and as urgent as the rescue of the Regular Army from the perils which at this moment surround it.

Can it be said with equal certainty that those who desire to see the Regular Army strengthened are bound in their turn to desire compulsory training, compulsory service, or conscription? That is a difficult question to answer. Much must, of course, depend upon what is really involved in the adoption of the various schemes referred to. Unfortunately there is still much obscurity upon this point.

### UNIVERSAL TRAINING

Let us see exactly how we stand. Universal training has many influential advocates. Lord Roberts, the most experienced and the most justly respected of these advocates, has gone some way towards formulating his demand by stating that he requires at least a million men trained to the use of the rifle. It is obvious, however, that the attainment

of this ideal cannot be regarded as furnishing a final solution of our difficulties. It is a fact that admits of no dispute, but which is not as widely known as it ought to be, that at the present moment over 900,000 inhabitants of the United Kingdom are receiving pay from the State in time of peace, in consideration of their receiving instruction in the use of arms under official regulations. It is also beyond doubt that there are, in this country, over 3,000,000 persons within the military age who are receiving or have received military instruction at the expense of the State. And yet it is in the face of this fact that all competent observers are agreed in thinking that our existing military preparations are utterly inadequate. Clearly, something more than a million men trained to the use of the rifle is required. Indeed, it is permissible to doubt whether compulsory training, as apart from compulsory service in time of war, can ever be of much value. It is sometimes supposed that the fact of a man having received a certain amount of military training will make him more anxious to take the field than if he had not received such training; but, unfortunately, experience does not confirm this view. Moreover, the history of the Civil War in the United States and of our own campaign in South Africa are before us to point the moral that in order to retain men in the fighting line compulsion is necessary.

It is not suggested that any blame attaches to

those who do not fulfil an obligation which they have never undertaken. We have no reason to expect that persons who have not contracted to fight, and who in many instances have occupations which they cannot possibly abandon without great loss and inconvenience, will with one accord sacrifice themselves as and when the exigencies of military service require.

### VOLUNTEERING FOR WAR

Mr. Haldane has on many occasions stated that the Territorial Army is to be regarded as a great reservoir from which the deficiencies of the Regular Army may be made good in time of war.

‘Some of them (the Volunteers or Territorial Army) . . . would have to form that big National Reserve out of which our Army must be fed and expanded when the great emergencies come in a national crisis.’<sup>1</sup> And again: ‘If the mind of the nation is concentrated on the defence of its own interest, it will, if it is made possible for it by adequate preparation to do so, pour out, in case of necessity, very substantial numbers, to the expansion as well as to the support of the Expeditionary Army.’<sup>2</sup>

Those who are familiar with the numerous speeches which have been made on this subject, and with the opinions expressed by a large section of the Press, are aware that many persons have taken this

<sup>1</sup> July 22, 1906.

<sup>2</sup> Memorandum on Army Scheme, July 30, 1906.

declaration of the Secretary of State seriously, and really believe that the needs of the Regular Army in a prolonged war can and will be met by casual volunteering from the Territorial Force.

There is, however, no reason whatever for believing that we are justified in relying upon the Territorial Force to do the work of a real Reserve. On the contrary, all experience in our own country and in every other, supports the view that if we rely upon such a support we are destined to be rudely disillusioned.

The statement that the officers and men of the Territorial Force will not volunteer in adequate numbers in the event of a foreign war, is sometimes resented by the self-constituted champions of that Force.

But such resentment is altogether unreasonable. The contention that, generally speaking, men who have enlisted solely for service at home, and who by every conceivable tie and interest are bound to remain at home, will not, as a rule, go abroad except under compulsion, is not one that justifies either blame or surprise.

It would, indeed, be very surprising if any large number of the 'Territorials' did undertake a service so unlike that for which they enlisted, and so incompatible with their ordinary pursuits. But if there were any doubt about the matter it would be dissipated by an examination of what has actually taken



place at home and abroad under similar circumstances. A study of what has occurred in time of war justifies the general statement that men who do not undertake a particular obligation in time of peace cannot be relied upon to assume that obligation in time of war. There have always been exceptions, and they have been numerous enough to prove the rule. They have not proved numerous enough to justify us in disregarding it.

A short time ago a statement appeared in a journal which brings to the discussion of military subjects more zeal than wisdom, that this country would deservedly perish if in the event of a serious war its sons were not prepared to come forward in their thousands to fight its battles.

If this be so, the outlook for this country is undoubtedly gloomy; for, as a matter of fact, the country's sons have not, as a rule, come forward to any very remarkable extent.

#### A LESSON FROM THE CRIMEAN WAR

During the Crimean War the country was white hot with patriotism, and there was scarcely a man at home who was not prepared to capture Sebastopol, or see some one else perish in the attempt. But the cold fact remains that we never did and never could put 30,000 men into line; that despite heavy bounties we could not induce men to enlist; that the boys whom we did enlist



could not be induced to leave their trenches before the Redan; and that this great nation was actually paying Swiss and Germans to defend it; and that a *Foreign Legion* composed of Germans and Swiss was encamped at Chobham.

### WHAT HAPPENED IN SOUTH AFRICA

In 1900 a certain number of Volunteers went out to South Africa, and great credit is due to those who did so. But it would be a grave mistake to over-rate the value of this contribution, or to suppose for a moment that it was on a scale which would meet our needs in the event of our being engaged in a European war, or a war for the defence of India.

The facts are short and simple.

Sixty-four companies were raised in the first instance; their establishment was 7,424, the number embarked 7,337. A 'Waiting Company' was to have been formed for each of the companies sent abroad, but for these companies only 2,983 men enlisted, and from these 1,074 men went out to reinforce the Service Companies. By the time the second contingent was formed a large number of the men in the 'Waiting Companies' had cancelled their engagements, and were not available. A second contingent ultimately went out, not to reinforce, but to relieve the first. This second contingent numbered 5,363. Eight companies came to an

end. In January 1902 a third contingent was raised, but, as before, not to reinforce but to replace those who had already gone. This contingent numbered 2,410. Of the original sixty-four companies, sixteen had practically died out, and only eight were kept up to strength. Meanwhile the Volunteer Force had increased by nearly 50,000 men. It is necessary to recite these plain facts, not, as over-sensitive champions of the Volunteer Force are in the habit of suggesting, with any sinister intention, but simply because they illustrate a well-known truth, the truth, namely, that if men are required to perform the onerous duties of a soldier in war they must be retained either by contract or by compulsion. It is a grim truth, but it is a truth. And in this connexion it is very curious to observe that those who most indignantly resent the suggestion that the Volunteers or the Territorials cannot be relied upon to serve in the only kind of war in which this country has ever been engaged, are the most resolute in objecting to any inquiry being made in time of peace as to how many of the Local Force are prepared to serve abroad in time of war; and how many of those willing to serve are fit to serve. It is difficult to understand the position of those who take this objection, and at the same time contend that the Volunteers or the Territorials will be of great service in time of war.

Before leaving this subject altogether, it is

desirable to give yet one more illustration of the carelessness with which those who advocate a 'go-as-you-please' army, study the open book of History which has been written for their instruction. It might be said that if ever there was a case in which men under no obligation to serve would volunteer to go to the front, and to stay at the front, it would be when the national soil was invaded, and when the homes and hearths of the people were threatened. It would also be quite in accordance with the extraordinarily high estimate which we always form of our own military qualities to say that the Anglo-Saxon would be the most alert of all people in his passion for self-sacrifice in so good a cause. And yet we have staring us in the face the plain facts as to what took place during the American Civil War. The flag on Fort Sumter had been fired on, the national soil had been invaded, the homes and liberties of the North were menaced by an active and victorious enemy. What happened? Did volunteering furnish the number required to fill the ranks of the Federal Army, was the love of fighting or even the love of country sufficient to send men to the front and to keep them there?

#### A LESSON FROM THE UNITED STATES

Let us see what History has to tell us. At the outbreak of the war volunteering took place on a large scale, the war was popular, and it was hoped

and generally believed that it would be brief. The first volunteers engaged for three years, and we are told that it was the presence of these men in the ranks which alone enabled the Army to withstand the drain that was made upon it.

But the war went on, it did not come to an end, and it ceased to be a popular novelty.

‘The efforts of popular leaders had ceased, and patriotic enthusiasm had been damped to such a degree that for a while it only feebly responded to the renewed efforts of the authorities.

‘The total failure of McClelland’s Richmond campaign, and the second battle of Bull Run, greatly deepened further despondency. Under this accumulation of discouragements, the need of speedy reinforcements became so great that a resort to a mere temporary expedient became necessary, and an order of the President called upon the Governor of the loyal States for a draft of 300,000 men from the State Militia to serve for a term of nine months. This system of drafting, however, proved totally ineffective; and . . . it became evident that a more regular and general system of recruiting must be adopted. Accordingly on March 3rd, 1863, Congress passed a *General Conscription Law*, requiring all citizens between the ages of twenty and forty-five to be enrolled in military service, and called out by drafts.’<sup>1</sup>

It was time. Already in July of the previous year (1862) the Secretary for War had been compelled to issue an order which, after stating that—

‘The absence of officers and privates from their duty under various pretexts while receiving pay at great

<sup>1</sup> *The Cambridge Modern History*, vol. vii.

expense and burden to the Government made it necessary that efficient measures should be taken to compel their return to duty,'<sup>1</sup>

commanded the immediate return of the absentees to the Colours.

I am not presuming to blame either those citizens of the United States who failed to volunteer, or those who, having volunteered, turned back from the work they had undertaken. But the point I desire to make clear is that, even when their own homes were in danger, mere zeal and a love of fighting were not sufficient to keep them in the ranks. Something more was required, and something more was supplied. In the end, these conscripts became the formidable soldiers who, under Grant and Sherman, fought the war to a finish, and compelled the surrender of the heroic Lee. But for us the lesson remains, and the lesson is this: Those who think that we can depend upon a purely voluntary home-keeping force to maintain the British Army in the field in any war in which the British Army is likely to be engaged, are deceiving themselves, and are deceiving others.

<sup>1</sup> *Ubi supra.*

## CHAPTER XIX

## CONSCRIPTION REAL AND SHAM

*'On ne badine pas avec la Guerre.'*

COMPULSORY TRAINING MEANS COMPULSORY  
SERVICE

IT seems apparent, from what has been said in the preceding chapter, that the corollary to compulsory training is compulsory service, and this corollary many earnest and capable men have accepted as inevitable.

Let us, therefore, examine the question of compulsory service by the light of what has gone before. If it be true that this country may have to resist an invasion in force, then compulsory service is not only reasonable, it is inevitable.

Those who think that no invasion need be apprehended will naturally be reluctant to accept an exceedingly costly and inconvenient arrangement whose only justification can be its absolute necessity. But to those, on the other hand, who entertain a contrary belief, there can be only one course open. They are bound to advocate conscription. For let



there be no mistake about it; no phrases, however attractive, will alter facts. If we are to be exposed to the dangers which threaten Continental nations we must take the same precautions as other nations have adopted. There must be no playing at soldiers. To begin with we must have an immense corps of officers and N.C.O.'s. We must have grown men in the ranks, and those men must receive an amount of training which will enable them to meet and defeat the enemy, whoever he may be. There may be many opinions as to what the character of this training ought to be. But unless the military authorities of every other country in the world are wrong, and we alone are right, it ought to bear no resemblance whatever to that which we think sufficient for our Special Reserve and our Territorial Force. To begin with, we must enlist men, not boys. In the rout which followed the Battle of Waterloo boys from the French schools endeavoured to defend the heights of Montmartre. It was gallant, but it was not war. The heights of Montmartre were not held. It is only the manhood of this country that can hold the field against the manhood of another nation. The period of initial training must greatly exceed that which is considered sufficient under the make-believe system.

### MEN, NOT BOYS

The Swiss, who take their soldiers at twenty and keep them till they are fifty, have recently extended

their minimum term of service to a period which is nearly three times that of the ordinary Territorial. Sweden, which has probably less to fear than any European Power, has extended her period of infantry training with the colours to one year. Germany and France demand two years; but they consider this so inadequate that both Powers are holding out special inducements to men to re-engage, especially in the artillery and cavalry. There are probably more long service soldiers in the German service than in the whole of our Regular Army at home.

It is said that Belgium is about to reduce her initial period of service to fifteen months. The object of the Belgian authorities appears to be to increase the number of men available, rather than to add to the military efficiency of the individuals called out for training. It is noteworthy, however, that the term of fifteen months is precisely that which was proposed for the infantry of the Home Army by the present writer when occupying the post of Secretary of State for War in 1904. The proposal was abandoned because the military authorities both inside and outside the War Office, with one single exception, agreed in declaring that fifteen months was quite inadequate, and that two years' training with the colours was the minimum which could be accepted. It was for this reason that the two years' term was adopted. It is also worthy of note that the very same military authorities who in 1904 were

unanimously of opinion that two years' training with the colours was the minimum which could be accepted with safety, are now, we are told, equally unanimous in support of the view that six months' training at a depot is sufficient to qualify boys of seventeen and upwards to take the field as efficient soldiers.

### PHYSICAL TRAINING

Then, again, the physical training must be a serious one. In our passion for make-believe we have persuaded ourselves that the training of the Territorial Force is so effective that it is likely to improve the national physique. A moment's consideration will show the absurdity of this idea. Thousands of Territorials are addicted to physical exercises and outdoor amusements, and would indulge these healthy tastes if the Territorial Force had never existed. But attendance at a dozen drills in a twelvemonth, with a week or ten days spent in camp, including two Sundays, an inspection, and possibly one 'off day,' do not leave a very conspicuous mark upon a man. Those who have seen the kind of training which is obligatory in the German barrack-yards, who have marked the recruits leading that unpleasant but effective accomplishment the *parade-schritt*, who have marked both German and French troops carrying 40lb. to 50lb. on their backs day after day for many miles, will understand why it is that the improved physique of the Continental

populations strikes the eye of every observant traveller.

### THE COST OF CONSCRIPTION

It is a training of this kind that we shall have to adopt if we are going to accept conscription, and to accept it seriously. Far be it from me to suggest that if we do undertake to bear the burden we shall not, in some respects, be the gainers. Anything which improves the physique of a people, which inculcates habits of discipline and order, which exhibits obedience to lawful orders and self-sacrifice for a common ideal as virtues, must be good for a nation. And all these things conscription, if it be real and thorough, does encourage. That it can also produce some very great evils can scarcely be denied. Opinions will always differ. My own, after some study of the problem, is to the effect that gold may be bought too dear; and that unless conscription be absolutely necessary for the safety of the nation, we are, on the whole, better without it. But the main point to bear in mind is, that while the real thing may conceivably be of value in more ways than one, the make-believe variety must always be an unmitigated curse.

For, be it remembered that compulsory service, under whatever form it is adopted, must involve an enormous expenditure. Unlike other countries, we must have two armies: the Regular Army, for

oversea service, with the Royal Navy maintained as at present; and, in addition, a vast conscript host tied to the soil of this country.

Exception has sometimes been taken to a return published by the War Office in 1904, in which the cost of a conscript army was given at what some critics consider to be too high a figure. The return was, in fact, a mere actuarial calculation, based upon the only serious proposals for conscription which were available at the time. It is possible, however, that the thing might be done for less; but if it were, it would certainly be ill done. An army raised by conscription will, beyond all doubt, be a very costly one in time of peace if it is to be a real one. If, on the other hand, it is to be a play-about army, it will be a very costly one in war.

### A WORKING PLAN

One other important point remains to be considered. By universal admission our principal military need is the power of expanding the Regular Army for service oversea. Compulsory service, as it is generally understood, and as it is explained by its principal advocates, will give us no help towards the attainment of this object.

General Mackinnon told the Royal Commission that out of the 35,000 Volunteers of London we could not expect to get more than two regiments if we were in need of units for a foreign war.



Conscription for oversea service is not possible. One suggestion, and, so far as I know, one only, has been made by the advocates of compulsory service. Mr. L. S. Amery, who knows the Army and the work the Army has to do as well as any man in this country, has seen the difficulty, and has made a proposal which does, in fact, meet it. He proposes that while service should be made compulsory, only those men who engage to serve abroad in time of war should receive pay. The plan has the merits of being simple and of doing what is wanted. Whether the British public is likely to accept it is another question.

But, after all, we do not as yet know what the advocates of compulsory training or the advocates of compulsory service really want. It is greatly to be desired that some of those who are working at these problems should be more definite than they have hitherto been. The public would like to know exactly what is proposed. What is to be the term of service? At what age are recruits to be enlisted? How much training is the soldier to have? What steps are to be taken to raise and train the officers. Where are ranges and manœuvre grounds to be found? They would like to know under what conditions the new troops are to serve. Whether they are to serve abroad, and, if so, under what conditions? Is the new law to be applied to the Navy; and, if not, why not? And, lastly, they will desire to know



what is to be the cost of the new Army for pay, equipment, stores, armaments, barracks, &c. When these points have been made perfectly clear it will be much easier than it is at present to come to a conclusion with regard to the desirability of universal training or compulsory service.

#### THE TERRITORIAL ARMY AND CONSCRIPTION

I think I have made it clear that while I am thoroughly in sympathy with the spirit in which the advocates of the two systems approach the questions of national duty and national danger, I am not at present convinced that the actual remedies proposed are necessary, or that they are appropriate to the needs of the Empire.

But I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that every day during which the existing system of pure make-believe is continued must strengthen the hands of those who advocate a change. I believe that I express the opinion of many earnest and reasonable men when I say that unnecessary and even undesirable as a conscript army may be, it would be infinitely better to create one than to prolong the dangerous sham to which the nation has been condemned by those who at present control its military administration.

## CHAPTER XX

FURTHER REFLEXIONS UPON COMPULSORY  
SERVICE

## WHAT THE HISTORY OF ALL WAR TEACHES

'The history of all war shows that our country can be defended by means of a sea-going Navy and a mobile Field Army, superior to that of the enemy, and consequently able to carry the war into his waters and territory, protecting our own from the ravages of war and inflicting them upon the people opposed.'—*The Military Correspondent of the 'Times': 'Imperial Strategy.'*

## THE NAVY THE TRUE DEFENCE

IT is impossible to forecast the direction in which public opinion with regard to the question of compulsory service will ultimately move. It would be idle to ignore the fact that at the present time there is a growing tendency to accept the view that the Navy cannot protect us from an invasion, and that a great conscript army can. That this is a reasoned conclusion I am not prepared to admit. I believe that nothing has occurred which really vitiates the conclusion at which the Committee of Defence and the Secretary of State had arrived, and which they still held to be valid until a few weeks, or at most until a few months ago. Nay more, I am not aware that

the Committee of Defence and the Secretary of State have actually changed their opinions. Of this I am certain, namely, that those who allege that the facts which have recently been laid before the Committee of Defence, and which are supposed by some persons to have invalidated the conclusions previously arrived at, do not really affect the question. I am certain, on the contrary, that almost everything that has taken place in connexion with the development of naval warfare during the last ten years has enormously strengthened the naval position. It is deeply to be regretted that the naval side of the position has never been publicly examined. I am convinced that if it were so examined, it would become apparent that, so far from being easier than in the past, the task of an invader endeavouring to land in the face of a serious naval opposition is more hopeless at the present day than it has ever been. But unluckily the realities of naval warfare are little understood by the people of this country; and indeed the same thing may be said of some of our most eminent and accomplished military writers. To borrow a phrase from Admiral Mahan, it would almost seem to be true of them as it was of Bonaparte, that, irresistible on land, their power ceases directly they come in contact with the salt water. The ineptitudes that are spoken and written about the Navy and its work in war are indeed extraordinary.

I do not hesitate to admit that in my own opinion

it would be far better to take the four or five millions which are now annually spent upon a necessarily ineffective Army tied to the soil, and to spend half of it upon the Navy, and the other half upon increasing the prestige, adding to the Reserves, increasing the pay of the officers, and assuring the future of the soldiers of the Regular Army.

These, I am aware, are personal opinions which are not popular, and are not at present shared by many. I am not sanguine enough to expect that they will be accepted. On the contrary, I cannot fail to observe the rapid growth of an opinion favourable to a great addition to our Home Army. I have already said that, provided neither the Navy nor the Regular Army suffers from the development of this policy, some good and no great harm may possibly result from its adoption; provided always that the new compulsory army, on which so many people have apparently set their hearts, be a real and not a sham army. I would nevertheless most earnestly beg those who are utilising their power and influence to further the cause of compulsory training or compulsory service, to consider whither their advocacy is leading us.

### THE QUESTION OF COST

At the present moment this country, with its population of some forty-three millions, is paying annually £32,000,000 for its Navy, and nearly

£28,000,000 for its Army, which includes some £4,000,000 for its Territorial Force. That the cost of the Army must increase is certain. That unless the Territorial Force is to be an absolute failure, even from the point of view of those who believe that it has some military value, an additional million at the very least must be spent upon it is certain. If the present wrecking policy with regard to the Regular Army be continued, it is quite possible that there may be no serious increase on that head; though, as long as the Cardwell System is maintained, there will be no reduction. It is hardly necessary to point out that these gigantic figures take no account of the expenditure on the British Army in India, or on the Indian Army.

Sixty millions is a heavy burden for even the richest nation to bear; and it is a lamentable reflexion that although the taxpayer provides this gigantic sum almost without a murmur, he is told by all those who have a right to instruct him, that from the military point of view the condition of this country is still profoundly unsatisfactory.

Now let us see what comfort is offered him by the advocates of compulsory service. If compulsory service were to be the law of the land to-morrow, how should we stand? Out of the three demands which are now made upon the taxpayer two would remain as they are to-day, or rather would increase. Expenditure on the Navy is rising,



and must continue to rise. Nor can a saving be effected in the cost of the Regular Army. However many millions of men we may raise for the defence of this country, the necessity for maintaining the Regular Army and its Reserves will, as Lord Roberts has justly observed, remain unaltered. The Regular Army has now been pared down to the quick, and its cost is much more likely to increase than to diminish. If it is to be made adequate to our needs it must increase. There remain for our consideration the four millions which are at present spent, or will shortly be spent, upon the Territorial Force. Does any reasonable person suppose that the substitution of a force of a million men, raised by compulsion, will diminish this cost? It is of course obvious that it will greatly increase it. Even if we assume that the new host is to be a 'play-about' army of the most childish description, it will cost many millions.<sup>1</sup> Arms, uniforms, stores, ammunition, buildings, manœuvring grounds, must be provided. Thousands of officers and N.C.O.'s must be instructed and paid. But it would be an insult to the intelligence of those who advocate the creation of this great force to suggest that they do not intend it to be a real force capable of holding its own against a highly trained enemy. For, be it remembered, that the need for the force depends

<sup>1</sup> The official estimate of the annual cost of a million home-keeping soldiers trained for six months only was stated by Mr. Haldane to be £20,000,000 (House of Commons, 14th December 1908).



upon the acceptance of invasion as a possibility. If that be the case, all idea of a 'play-about' army may be dismissed. We require the real article or nothing. But if that be so, who shall measure the result in cost? Barracks, ranges, manœuvring grounds on a large scale must be provided. An army must be created which, when mobilised, will be equal in every respect to the armies of the Continent. What is more, we shall find out, as other nations have found out to their cost, that though fortifications cannot take the place of a field army, a field army must be supported by entrenched positions. The Franco-German frontier is not 200 miles in length, and the French have already spent more than a hundred million sterling in fortifying it since the war. If the invasion theory be accepted, our frontier will be nearly 8,000 miles.

#### PUBLIC OPINION AND COMPULSORY SERVICE

These facts undoubtedly afford food for reflexion. Is it reasonably probable that the people of this country, with their ever-growing burdens, will accept an addition of some fifteen or twenty millions annually to its Military Budget? Is it certain that even the great wealth of this country can provide this gigantic sum? For my own part, I am by no means as certain as are some of my friends that the people of this country will accept the principle of compulsory service. I think their reluctance to do

so is not in the least admirable because it is for the most part due to considerations which have nothing to do with the military question involved ; and all my sympathies are with those who declare that if the nation demands the services of all its sons, those services should be rendered as a matter of absolute duty. But that in a country in which Passive Resisters, Suffragettes, Anti-Vaccinators, and other anti-social persons are not only tolerated but are held by many to be entitled to special exemption from the penalties inflicted upon other law-breakers, the prospect of enforcing compulsory service, unless and until the nation itself is convinced of its absolute necessity, seems to me somewhat remote. Those who advocate compulsory service are bound to take these things into account. If they have counted the cost, if they know what their demand really involves, and are satisfied that the country can and will meet that demand in money and men, it is not for me to criticise them ; but it is fair to say that up to the present time they have given no evidence whatever that they have looked facts in the face, and have realised what is the true meaning of that for which they ask with so much persistency.

Meanwhile, who can doubt that these well-meaning advocates are running the risk of seeing that which is undeniably good destroyed, without any certainty whatever of being able to replace it by something better ? I do not myself believe that this

country can or will bear the cost of an adequate Navy, an adequate Regular Army, and an efficient Conscript Army. I greatly fear that in the attempt to obtain these three objects, we may find ourselves left with an inadequate Navy, an insufficient Regular Army, and a totally inefficient and useless Conscript Army.

### THE REAL NEED

Who can doubt that if we possessed a really overwhelming sea-going Navy, coupled with an efficient system of maritime coast defence, and a Regular Army equal in quality to our best troops, such as the Royal Marines, the Guards, and the Royal Artillery, an Army capable of instant mobilisation, and with a Reserve of 300,000 trained officers and men, we should be in a position of almost impregnable security? These things we can have, and can have at a cost exceeding very slightly, if at all, that which our present unsatisfactory establishments cost us. But if we want the end, we must also want the means. We must concentrate our efforts upon the army which will fight and can fight, we must raise the prestige, we must improve the prospects, and we must ensure the quality of the officers and men of whom that army is composed. If, and when we have done all this, we have time, money, and inclination to create an organisation by which the whole manhood of the country

may be made available for service in the ranks of the existing cadres in case of need, that will, doubtless, be well. But our first duty is to strengthen the Navy, our second duty is to strengthen the Army. The rest will wait.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An advertisement for recruits has recently been issued under the rather pompous title of 'A Proclamation to the Men of London.' The document seems neither better nor worse than a good many others which have been issued for the same purpose, but it contains one passage which ought not to have been inserted in it. It is true that Lord Esher, who is one of the 'Proclaimers,' has in all probability done more than any other living man to land us in our present difficulties, and it is quite right that he should do all in his power to get us out of them. But Lord Esher, though he speaks with all the influence which membership of the Committee of Defence may give him, has no right whatever to threaten this country with conscription merely because his plans have failed. He speaks with no authority on this subject, and he is powerless to enforce his threat. Moreover, it is not correct to say that conscription is the only alternative to our present arrangements. If the public is led to believe that the only substitute for the Territorial Force is a great conscript army, infinite mischief may result. If, for any reason, the Territorial Army fails or becomes discredited, and if the country, as is exceedingly likely, refuses to adopt conscription, men will be inclined to despair because they have been told that apart from the two remedies, of which one has been discarded and the other rejected, there is no means by which it can be defended. It would be a misfortune if such an utterly erroneous conclusion as this were to be accepted. There is not the slightest doubt that the military needs of this country can be supplied by a system which involves neither reliance on the Territorial Army, nor the adoption of conscription.



PART III

THE WAR OFFICE, PARLIAMENT  
AND THE NATION





## CHAPTER XXI

## HOW PARLIAMENT IS DECEIVED

'It is well known that George IV laboured under the delusion that he was present, and played an important part, at the Battle of Waterloo. It is related that, on one occasion, he appealed to the Duke of Wellington to confirm his statement that he had been on the field. "I hath often heard your Majesty say so," replied the Duke.'—*Anecdote.*

## HOW THE HOUSE OF COMMONS IS TREATED

ON more than one occasion in the course of this work it has been necessary to refer to statements made in the House of Commons, on behalf of the War Office, which have called for criticism and examination. It is unfortunately the fact that not once, but many times, advantage has been taken of the apathy or ignorance of the House of Commons, to make statements which would not be tolerated by a professional assembly, or by any audience which had a real acquaintance with military history, or military administration. A single misstatement of this kind is, perhaps, not very mischievous. The House of Commons cares very little about military matters, and members exhibit their indifference by their almost ostentatious absence

whenever questions concerning the Army are under discussion.

But the cumulative effect of many erroneous statements is serious. The constant repetition of error, the adjustment of facts to suit the exigencies of a political move, tend to create an incorrect and consequently a dangerous public opinion upon great and important matters of principle.

It would be a hopeless and unprofitable task to attempt to recall and to correct all the erroneous statements with regard to Army matters which have been made during the last three years. The number has been large, and much mischief has been done. If, however, it be impossible to undo the harm, it is perhaps possible to prevent more mischief resulting from a similar cause. It is with this object in view that I have thought it worth while to set forth in the following chapters a few examples of the manner in which the House of Commons is misled on questions of real importance.

It is, of course, difficult to persuade the public that statements made with such an immense parade of authority, and arrayed in such eloquent and elaborate forms as those to which Parliament has become accustomed, can be open to criticism, much less to contradiction. The national tendency to believe anything which is said at great length and with an air of immense authority is almost irresistible. It is for this reason that in each of the examples

selected the actual facts have been stated in a very plain and simple fashion, so that all who read them may understand exactly what is the point at issue. All that I beg of my readers is that they will constitute themselves the judges in this matter, and that they will ask themselves on which side the truth lies in each case. The evidence is before them, I wish for no better jury than one composed of impartial readers who, discarding any question as to the merits or demerits of the advocates on either side, will give their verdict according to the evidence. Only one thing further I would ask, namely, that if any of my readers are convinced that, in the instances to which I have drawn their attention, the House of Commons and the public at large have really been misled, they will be cautious in the future when asked to accept statements which have no better authority behind them than that which they have condemned.

#### A 'NIDUS EQUINUS,' OR CLEAR THINKING IN ACTION

The first example which I propose to submit, throws an interesting light upon the value of that claim to the monopoly of 'clear thinking' which has been so often asserted by the Secretary of State for War, and to which many amiable and uninformed persons have paid ready homage.

On the 8th March 1906 the Secretary of State for War, anxious, apparently, to demonstrate the

value of 'clear thinking,' informed the House that during the course of one of his excursions he had made a great discovery. The simple tale runs as follows :—

'I stumbled across one of these structures (the Surrey forts) the other day, when taking one of my reflective walks abroad, and going in, I found 3,300 rounds of ammunition, cordite, lyddite, shrapnel, the latest pattern of gloves for people working with unbending body, and the latest pattern of the No. 3 Axe. . . . I estimated, with an eye not wholly unpractised in these matters, that there was no less than £25,000 worth of stores there, and I afterwards ascertained that I was nearly right. . . .

'What an advantage it is when you can get rid of these things root and branch, by the aid of the given principle. Those things were carefully considered, and in great detail; and now, with the consent of the Government and of the Defence Committee, and as the result of acting on a belief in the principle which we have inherited from our predecessors, they are going to disappear root and branch as fast as they can be made to disappear.'<sup>1</sup>

In other words, Mr. Haldane's quick eye and ready wit discovered what had been hidden from all who had gone before him, namely, that the maintenance of the ring of forts round London was inconsistent with the existing scheme of defence; and that they ought to be abandoned and dismantled.

Had he spoken with a little less haste, however, Mr. Haldane would have ascertained that his discovery was, in his own selected phrase, a 'nidus

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Haldane, 8th March 1906.

equinus.' He would have found, on reference to the pages of Hansard, that more than a year before his predecessor had been attacked by Mr. Winston Churchill for having carried out the precise policy the necessity for which was revealed to Mr. Haldane in 1906.<sup>1</sup> He would also have discovered, if he had had time to ask his own Quarter-Master General, that the tools and stores which were worth so much money formed part of the general reserve stores of the Army, and were merely kept in the forts for convenience of storage, there being no room for them elsewhere. The stores remained *in situ* for many months after Mr. Haldane's promenade, not as part of the equipment of the forts, but because they were in a dry and convenient store-house. Very likely they are there still. As a matter of fact, not a single brass farthing was saved to the country by the discovery related with so much solemnity. No change of policy followed it. Beyond the cheer which the recital of such an example of perspicuity elicited, no result of any kind followed.

The incident of itself is not of importance, but it is worth recording, because it is typical of many others of the same kind.

<sup>1</sup> 'Perhaps in the right hon. gentleman's heart of hearts the spectacle of this vast unfortified capital, the greatest, the wealthiest city in the world, the depository of half the title deeds of civilisation, within sixty miles of a score of landing-places for the enemy, filled him with some feeling of disquietude.'—*Mr. Winston Churchill, M.P., 3-4-05.*



## CHAPTER XXII

### MR. HALDANE'S CHOSEN EXAMPLE

'But what good came of it at last?'

Quoth little Peterkin.

'Why, that I cannot tell,' said he;

'But 'twas a famous victory.'

*Southey.*

### THE ARMY OF THE LOIRE

AS far as I am aware, there is no authenticated instance in history of an untrained Citizen Army holding its own permanently against a fully trained Regular Force. Military opinion in every country in the world except our own recognises this truth and acts upon it. Military opinion in our own country also recognises the truth, but does not act upon it.

In view of this rather ominous combination of historical teaching, and scientific opinion, it was reasonable to anticipate that there might be some difficulty in persuading the Parliament and people of this country that a policy which had for its cardinal principles a great and permanent weakening of our small Regular Army, and the creation of a Citizen Force whose members were to receive an average training of some ten days in the year, and who were guaranteed by the War Minister to be unfit to face

an enemy for six months after embodiment, was a wise and a safe policy to adopt.

But the House of Commons and the general public are very ill-informed with regard to the military history of this country, or of any other. They could be relied upon to swallow statements which would be laughed at in any country which had had the misfortune to know what war meant. The House of Commons was about to be asked to approve of a policy which, though it had no relation whatever to war, or to the preparation for war, could be made exceedingly 'popular.' What could be more simple than for the responsible Minister, speaking with all the authority which his high position, his great attainments, and his ample sources of information combined to confer upon him, to declare that the popular policy was also the true policy, and to prove the correctness of his statement by an appropriate instance?

The Minister of War rose to the occasion. With perfect deliberation he told the House of Commons, and through them the country, in words which could not be misunderstood, that an untrained Citizen Army was not only a match for trained Regular troops, but was actually of greater value in the field than a Regular Army. With all history before him he selected his example of this convenient but astonishing truth. As an encouragement

to the people of England to entrust their fortunes to a partially trained Citizen Army, he cited the case of General Chanzy and the Army of the Loire. It would be unjust to Mr. Haldane not to quote his actual words.

#### MR. HALDANE ON GENERAL CHANZY'S ARMY

'In the Franco-German War, after the defeat of the main part of the Regular Army of France, Gambetta, a civilian, made a People's Army, which, in conjunction with the Army of the Loire, gave infinitely more trouble to the German strategists than the Regular Army had given.'<sup>1</sup>

Now this passage can have but one meaning, and one meaning only. It was a plain instruction to the House of Commons that inasmuch as General Chanzy, with a partially trained Citizen Army under his command, had proved a brilliant success in 1871, the House of Commons would be well advised to entrust the fortunes of this country to a similar force in time of war.

It is difficult to imagine who could have done the Secretary of State the disservice of supplying him with this amazing example. Not only is the result of General Chanzy's gallant struggle an almost classical example of the powerlessness of untrained troops, even in very superior numbers, to hold their own against a trained Regular Army; but there happen to be available for our guidance two

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Haldane, H. of C., 8-3-06.

absolutely conclusive reports upon the subject, the one written by Prince Frederick Charles, the other by General Chanzy himself; reports with which every officer in the Intelligence branch of the War Office must have been perfectly familiar. Let us give the victor precedence. Here in a few words is the substance of Prince Frederick Charles's report:

#### PRINCE FREDERICK CHARLES ON GENERAL CHANZY'S ARMY

'In November 1870 the small German force was compelled to evacuate Orleans. On the 16th January 1871, Prince Frederick Charles reported that since the 6th January he and the Grand Duke had taken more than 22,000 unwounded prisoners, 2 colours, 19 guns, more than a thousand ammunition wagons, and a large quantity of war material. The Army of the Loire was broken up, and with it Paris had lost its best hope of relief.'<sup>1</sup>

So much for the German side. Now let us see what General Chanzy himself has to say.

#### GENERAL CHANZY ON GENERAL CHANZY'S ARMY

Describing the retreat from the Loire, General Chanzy writes:

'It was necessary to send a detachment of Gendarmerie in advance by the principal roads to stop the fugitives. But they could not exercise any surveillance over the paths which intersect the country in every direction, and Le Mans was soon choked with a

<sup>1</sup> Hozier.

disorganised mob who, deprived of their organisation and absolutely without discipline, presented an aspect at once miserable and shameful to any army. It was, however, a consolation to be able to say that if such examples were only too frequent, the true men who remained in the ranks, and these were the majority, by the order of their march and the vigour of their resistance, concealed from the enemy a breakdown which can only be explained by the youth and military inexperience of those troops who failed.<sup>1</sup>

'The first news that reached me was that General Lalande, who had been posted on the plateau of La Tuilerie in the centre of the line with his Breton Mobiles and Artillery, had during the night spontaneously evacuated this magnificent position without defending it, and in the face of a very inferior force. The Mobiles of Ile-et-Vilaine took to flight on the discharge of the first shell; the enemy occupied La Tuilerie without firing a shot.

'At two o'clock in the morning the Admiral reported that the troops, who had been with great difficulty assembled for this attack, fled and broke up at the first shot fired, and that it was impossible to retake the position; that the Division posted on his left had disbanded during the night, and abandoned its positions, which were at once occupied by the Prussians, and that with the exception of Roquebrune's Division, the troops, carried away by panic and an incomprehensible demoralisation, had for the most part deserted, that it was impossible to count on them, and retreat became inevitable.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A considerable number of regular troops, principally Artillerymen, and a number of sailors from the Fleet were included in General Chanzy's command.

<sup>2</sup> Chanzy's Report to Gambetta, 13-1-71.

## SOME REFLEXIONS AND A MORAL

A well-known military writer<sup>1</sup> has commented upon these reports in words which every soldier knows to be absolutely justified—

‘The disadvantages of depending on untrained Volunteers, or half-drilled Militia, or *Levés-en-masse*, or anything of the kind, became painfully apparent to the French Commander-in-Chief, and through him to every nation in the world, except perhaps our own.

‘The military virtues of Chanzy and some of his subordinates were remarkable, but the evils of want of discipline and training, and the necessity for making war a serious business, were very clearly demonstrated.

‘What is the lesson? The lesson is that in modern Europe it is utterly useless to trifle with the art of war. . . . That if a nation wishes to exist, no amount of money will save it. The French had money without any limit . . . their numbers were legion; it is hard to tell how many Chanzy had; he probably had 150,000; in these positions he had at any rate 118,000, perhaps more; he was in his own country, with the world to supply him, with patriotism at his back, and with a brilliant orator to kindle enthusiasm. Yet in the worst possible weather he was beaten by half his number, and many of these could not be engaged in the battle.’

But it must not be forgotten that Mr. Haldane spoke not only of General Chanzy’s Army, but of those other armies which Gambetta, in his heroic but ineffectual zeal called into existence in the hope of retrieving the mischief which the military policy

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Miller Maguire.



of the French Radicals in 1869—a policy closely resembling that of our own Radicals of to-day—had made inevitable. Let those who desire to learn the fate of those unhappy legions study the sombre history of their failures, their defeats, and their ultimate annihilation, as it is written in the terrible pages of M.M. Margueritte's '*Tronçons du glaive.*'

Such is the example which the Secretary of State for War, speaking with all the authority of his great office, thought fit to bring before the House of Commons as a justification for his policy. Such an act requires no comment.

## CHAPTER XXIII

## THE ARMY OF A DREAM

P. HENRY. Let him alone, we shall have more anon.

FALSTAFF. Dost thou hear me, Hal?

P. HENRY. Ay, and mark thee too, Jack.

FAL. Do so, for it is worth the listening to.

These nine men in buckram that I told thee of . . .

P. HEN. So, two more already.

FAL. Their points being broken . . .

Began to give me ground; but I followed me close, cam  
in fast and hard; and, with a thought, seven of th  
eleven I pay'd.

P. HEN. O monstrous! eleven buckram men grown out of two.

*Shakespeare, 'Hen. IV.'*

## THE CLAIM

SPEAKING to a large audience at Guildford at the end of November 1908, Mr. Haldane used the following words:—

‘I read occasionally in the papers, and I hear it boldly stated, that the Liberal Government has cut down the Regular Army. I am going to give you a few plain facts about that. (Cheers.) And what I have to state to you is that, so far from the Regular Army having been cut down, we are to-day 90,000 stronger than we were three years ago, and yet the Army costs two and a half millions less.’ (Loud cheers.)

If it were possible to divide the value of the statement just quoted into a hundred parts, it would probably not be a very great exaggeration to say that two parts represented the truth, or something approximating to it. The remaining ninety-eight parts are undoubtedly, and beyond all controversy, untrue. For all intents and purposes the entire statement is untrue; it conveys an impression which is the exact opposite of the truth. Lord Midleton was well within his rights when he declared in the House of Lords,<sup>1</sup> that the Secretary of State's claim to have increased the Regular Army by 90,000 men was '*a delusion*'; and his statement that he had reduced the cost by two and a half millions was '*absolutely incorrect*.' And Lord Midleton's conclusion was equally justified. '*The danger of making such statements without qualification is extreme*.' It is, indeed, a real and a great danger. When a Minister high in office uses his great position to influence his countrymen, the responsibility which lies upon him is heavy. To mislead or deceive the public on any point is wrong, and may be dangerous; but who shall measure the error, or exaggerate the danger when the public is misled upon a matter which concerns the life and death of the nation, a matter about which it trusts, and is entitled to trust those in authority, and with regard to which private persons possess, and can possess, no certain

<sup>1</sup> December 3, 1908.

knowledge. Already it has been stated, in millions of newspapers, that while the cost of the British Army has been diminished by two and a half millions, its strength has been increased by 90,000 men, and that both these things are due to the wise policy of the Liberal Government. If these things were true, if indeed we had added some three Army Corps to our available military strength within three years, and had saved two and a half millions in the process, then beyond doubt every Englishman would have reason to be grateful to the Government and to the Minister to whom the country owed these administrative triumphs. And at this moment millions of people probably do believe these things to be true, and are justified in believing them to be so because they have been said by a Minister whom they have been led to trust.

#### THE TRUTH ABOUT THE INCREASE OF MEN

Let us see what are the facts. First of all let us deal with the modicum of truth which a generous interpretation may be able to import into the Secretary of State's declaration. It is true that since 1905 the Army Reserve has increased by 39,289 men. It is true also that by a book entry a number of men who were formerly included in the Army List under the heading 'Militia' are now included under the heading 'Special Reserve.' Now let us inquire what is the meaning of these

facts, and how far they support the contention of the Secretary of State that the British Army has been strengthened for war; for that is what the public was intended to believe; that is what it did believe, and was justified in believing; and that is the only point which is of the slightest interest to the nation. *The British Army has not been strengthened for war: on the contrary, it has been very greatly weakened.* Such addition as there has been, has been no more due to the Liberal Government than it has been due to the Emperor of China. The cost of the Army has not been diminished by two and a half millions, or at all.

As has already been pointed out in this work, the whole policy of the present Administration has been to reduce the Regular Army, and to reduce precisely those parts of it which were most efficient and likely to be of most value in time of war. Between October 1, 1905, and October 1, 1908, Mr. Haldane has reduced the Regular Army with the Colours by no less than 18,653 men. The Horse and Field Artillery have lost 1,811 officers and men. The Garrison Artillery have lost 5,442. The Royal Engineers have lost 1,331. The Guards have lost one battalion, and the Line eight battalions. The Army Reserve has increased, it is true, and why? Principally because it has been swollen by thousands of short service men, enlisted when Lord Midleton was Secretary of State for War, and who are

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still available for service. To a small extent it has been increased, because, in order to effect the hasty and unwise reductions which have been referred to above, a certain number of men have been discharged to the Reserve, who ought still to be in the ranks. But so far from this increase in the Army Reserve being due, as the Secretary of State told his audience, to 'the Liberal Government,' it has notoriously taken place despite the policy of that Government and not because of it. The whole policy of the Government has been directed towards reducing the Army Reserve, and the longer that policy is pursued, the greater will the reduction be.

We now come to the question of the Special Reserve. Let us examine the nature of the trick which has been played upon the public. In 1905 the actual strength of the Militia was 85,814. It had its own units, its officers, and its non-commissioned officers. In 1908 the Militia was abolished, and by a stroke of the pen those men actually serving in it, who were willing to continue their services for a year or more, were entered under a new heading and were called 'Special Reservists.' To these were added a number of recruits who, with the Militiamen above referred to, are expected some day to number 70,000. It is to be observed that if and when the whole of the Special Reservists have been obtained, the Special Reserve will still be



15,000 less than the Militia which it has superseded. The Militia had its own officers, who served with the units in time of war. The Special Reserve has none. Nobody knows to what units the officers and men composing it will be attached in time of war. The Militia produced its own non-commissioned officers. The Special Reserve can and will produce none. Twenty thousand men of thirty years of age and upwards were serving in the Militia when it was destroyed. Men of thirty years of age are not permitted to serve in the Special Reserve. The personnel and training of the Militia were notoriously inadequate. The personnel of the Special Reserve is inferior to that of the Militia because it has lost all its N.C.O.'s and all its grown men. As to the value of the Militia we have an official statement of the first importance. The following is an extract from the Report of the Royal Commission on the Auxiliary Forces:—

‘The evidence which we have received satisfies us that the drill and training at present undergone by this force is insufficient to fit its units at short notice to oppose trained troops in the field.

‘As regards the Infantry, there is a consensus of opinion, both among Militia officers and those Regular officers who have had special opportunities of observation, that the average Militia battalion would not be fit to take the field except after several months’ continuous embodiment. . . .’

‘We are forced to the conclusion that the Militia in its existing condition is unfit to take the field for the

defence of this country. We think, however, that its defects arise from causes beyond the control of its officers and men.'

Nothing whatever has been done to render the Special Reserve more fit for war than the Militia. The Special Reserve is supposed to exist for the purpose of supplying drafts to the Regular Army in time of war. In case of war abroad, no man under twenty is allowed to serve. It is interesting to note that of the Special Reserve no less than 16,244, or 27 per cent., of the existing strength are under twenty, and consequently unable to serve.<sup>1</sup> It will, therefore, be seen that the Special Reserve is simply the Militia reduced in numbers, deteriorated in quality, and with a reduced period of training. It is true that the Militia were not bound by law to serve abroad in time of war, though as a matter of fact they did so serve. The Special Reservists are bound by law to serve abroad in time of war, and possibly some of them will be fit to do so, and this is the whole foundation of Mr. Haldane's claim as far as it refers to the Special Reserve.

#### ST THE TRUTH ABOUT THE DECREASE OF COST

n Lastly, we must examine the statement that the Liberal Government has reduced the cost of the Army by two and a half millions.

<sup>1</sup> As soon as the old Militiamen who have joined the Special Reserve have completed their term of service, the proportion of men under twenty will be much greater.

As a matter of plain fact the Liberal Government has done nothing of the kind, and to prove the untruth of the statement it is only necessary to call Mr. Haldane himself as a witness.

On May 11, 1908, the Secretary of State, in reply to Mr. Harold Cox, the member for Preston, informed the House of Commons that, apart from the cost of rearming the Artillery, a non-recurrent charge which came into the Estimates in 1905 and not in 1908, 'the actual expenditure in 1905-06 was £458,000 less than the Estimates for 1908-09.' If, however, we accept the point which Mr. Haldane seemed anxious to raise, to the effect that sums charged to loan in 1905 were placed on Estimates in 1908, and add to the earlier figure the amount expended on loan, the total expenditure of 1905 shows an excess over the Estimates of 1908, not of two and a half millions, but of £429,000., a very different figure. Putting the case, therefore, in the most extreme way, it will be seen that to set against a net reduction in the personnel of our land forces of over 100,000 men, we have saved rather less than half a million. It should be clearly understood, however, that at the present moment every branch of the Service is below establishment. Long before the establishment figures are reached this paltry saving of £429,000 will have vanished.

Nor must it be forgotten that while in theory expenditure has been transferred from loan to

Estimates, nothing of the kind has actually taken place. What has really happened is that the Government, being pledged not to place expenditure upon loan, and being afraid to put it upon Estimates, money which ought to have been spent has not been spent, and absolutely necessary barrack building and barrack repairs have been left undone, to the great disadvantage of our soldiers.

Enough has been said to show how utterly unjustifiable was the statement made by the Secretary of State at Guildford; and how thoroughly justified Lord Midleton was in declaring that statements of such a kind, made without qualification, are most dangerous. They are, indeed, dangerous; they are altogether unpardonable.

‘On ne badine pas avec la Guerre.’ Shams which may pass muster in peace time will be ruthlessly exposed in war. The Minister who, in order to reconcile public opinion to a doubtful political scheme, thinks it proper to tell his hearers that he has strengthened the Army by three Army Corps, when in fact he has greatly reduced it, and gravely injured it, has a very heavy responsibility to bear.

## CHAPTER XXIV

## THE 'RESERVE' MYTH

'I maintain that it is absolutely inconceivable that if you diminish the number of your units, and also diminish the strength of each unit, you will not in the result have a much smaller Reserve than you would have with a greater number of units and a higher strength.'—*Lord Lansdowne (House of Lords, 26-5-07).*

## WAR OFFICE ARITHMETIC

To the ordinary human being it would appear that an increase in the length of the Colour Service of the soldier, coupled with a reduction of the number of units in the Army and a reduction of the number of men serving in each of those units, would necessarily, and as a matter of course, tend to reduce the Reserve of the Army. The proposition is indeed of the same order as the commonly accepted statement that 'two and two make four,' and would seem to require as little proof. But it was necessary to convince the House of Commons and the public, that those who declared that the policy of 1906 would reduce both the Regular Army with the Colours and the Reserve, were factious persons and not entitled to credence. It was not a case for half measures: it had been asserted that the reduction of the number of cadres, and of the establishments of the cadres which remained, would necessarily

decrease the Reserve. The Secretary of State was equal to the occasion. The House of Commons was informed that so far from reducing the Reserve, the contemplated changes would increase it. But something more was required. A spoken assurance might be regarded as insufficient by the sceptical. Arithmetical proof was required, and arithmetical proof was promptly furnished. A War Office Return, certified by the War Office actuary, was promptly produced and laid before Parliament. It was quite convincing, and it showed a most satisfactory increase in the Reserve. Unluckily there happened to be another War Office Return, drawn up not many months previously and purporting to be signed by the same actuary, in which precisely the same problem was treated. The two Returns are here given side by side. They are worth careful examination.

WAR OFFICE CALCULATION OF RESERVE PRODUCED BY 156 BATTALIONS.

1905.

Establishment : 750.

Sections A & B . . 40,622

Section D . . . . . 15,023

Total . . 55,645

WAR OFFICE CALCULATION OF RESERVE PRODUCED BY 148 BATTALIONS.

1907.

Establishment : 720.

Sections A & B . . . 45,970

Section D . . . . . 17,400

Total . . 63,370

Excess of product of the smaller number of units and of the smaller establishment over the larger, 7,725 men.



## 'FIVE MINUS TWO EQUALS EIGHT'

From which it will be seen that according to the amazing arithmetic which is now in fashion at the War Office, it is demonstrated that the larger number of battalions with the larger establishment will produce the smaller Reserve. The utter absurdity of this conclusion was made even more marked by the explanation which the Secretary of State gave in haste when challenged to explain this droll arithmetic. 'The discrepancy,' he explained, was due to the fact that the Returns were calculated upon different data. It was suggested that in compiling the earlier Return the number of men extending their service in each year was taken at a higher figure than in the case of the Return for 1907. It is obvious that the more men who extend their Colour Service the smaller will be the numbers of the Reserve, and if it had been true that the average number of men extending had fallen during the years preceding the last Return, there would undoubtedly be a small addition to the Reserve, traceable to that cause. The increase, however, would have been infinitesimal and quite insufficient to account for the extraordinary discrepancy between the two Returns. But unluckily the facts were altogether the other way. The explanation was necessary and therefore it was invented; but the most casual reference to the Returns would have shown

that so far from the number of extensions having *decreased*, the number of extensions for 1906 was by far the highest that had been reached for ten years previously. But in this case, as in so many others, it was evidently supposed that 'anything is good enough for the House of Commons.'

Fortunately, it is probable that the percentage of men passing to the Reserve will be somewhat higher in the future than it has been in the past; but this will be solely due to the policy inaugurated in 1904, of exercising extreme severity in the matter of the rejection of recruits. The least laxity in this respect will send the Reserve down again. In justice to the War Office, I believe that the Return of 1907, and the explanation which was invented to account for it, are now regarded as blunders to be regretted. But it is unlucky that the country has never been officially informed of the truth.<sup>1</sup>

### THE EXPORT OF RESERVISTS

Another curious illustration of the manner in which the House of Commons is misled is to be found in the answer given by the Secretary of State for War to those members who questioned him with regard to the permission which has been

<sup>1</sup> Those who are interested in this matter will find it fully discussed in a pamphlet entitled *The New Army Scheme and the Reserve of the Regular Army*, published by the Liberal-Unionist Association, 6 Great George Street, Westminster.

given to 10,000 men of the Army Reserve to reside abroad.

Mr. Haldane defended the policy on its merits. It is not proposed to challenge that defence here, though the plan of making special efforts to increase the Reserve at home by 10,000 men, while a similar number are allowed to leave the country, is so remarkable as to require some explanation. It reminds one not a little of another great military authority who—

‘ . . . had ten thousand men;  
He marched them up to the top of a hill,  
And he marched them down again ’!

But Mr. Haldane went farther. He declared that the policy was merely a continuation of that of his predecessors. This statement was inexact. No such policy was ever framed or even contemplated by Mr. Haldane's predecessors. It was only in 1906 that the Act, in pursuance of which the Secretary of State has allowed the equivalent of twelve battalions of trained soldiers to leave the country, became law. The Act in the form of a Bill was submitted to Mr. Haldane's predecessor by the military authorities, and was declared by them to be expedient on the ground that a certain number of Reservists, whose services on the spot might be useful in time of war, were resident in India and in some of the Crown Colonies and Dependencies. The case of Sierra Leone was specially cited. It is not possible to keep

a full garrison in that Colony in time of peace, and it was obviously reasonable that if there were trained soldiers resident on the spot, their presence could only be an advantage to the military authorities. But the Bill did not, in fact, become law until 1906, and for the action taken under it Mr. Haldane is solely responsible. It may or may not be a wise thing to exercise the discretion conferred by the Act in such a way as to permit 10,000 Reservists to reside abroad, chiefly in the self-governing Colonies; but the individual who exercises the discretion is alone responsible for the policy.

That the policy adopted is not without its dangers is certain. There can be little doubt that if any of the great self-governing Colonies considers itself in peril, it will put in a first claim for the services of all trained men resident within its jurisdiction. If our Army Reservists are ever, in fact, retained for Colonial defence, there is no method by which we can compel them to return.

## CHAPTER XXV

## THE WORD OF A MINISTER

*'Tantamount to insanity.'*—*Right Hon. R. B. Haldane.*

THE STORY OF THE 'MARE'S NEST' AND THE  
TEN BATTALIONS

WHEN the policy of reducing the Regular Army was first introduced it was viewed with considerable mistrust by many persons. For Parliamentary purposes it was necessary to remove this mistrust, and to reconcile the public to the view that it was 'wise to be off with the old love before we were on with the new,' on the ground that, after all, we were not really going to be 'off with the old love' at all, and were going to have the new one as a charming addition to our existing establishment.

On the 8th March 1906 the Secretary of State for War made a statement which was admirably calculated, and was evidently intended, to create the required impression.

'There was a rumour the other day in the papers,' said Mr. Haldane, addressing the House of Commons,

'that I had decided to recommend the abolition of ten Battalions of the Line, and I tried to describe that rumour correctly as a "nidus equinus," which is a polite and classic way of calling it a "mare's nest." If I had decided to do anything of that kind it would have been in military eyes tantamount to insanity.'

Let it be noted in passing that the rumour was that ten *Battalions*, not necessarily Battalions of the Line, were to be destroyed.

Now let us observe the sequel. The statement made was plain and unequivocal. Parliament and the public were meant to understand, and did understand, that there was no ground for their fears, and that ten Battalions were not to be destroyed. They did not understand, and the misapprehension is pardonable, that what the Secretary of State really meant was that he did intend to destroy ten Battalions, and that eight of these Battalions were to be Battalions of the Line. But this is, in fact, exactly what he meant, and this is what he actually did within a few months of this categorical declaration. Eight Battalions of the Line and one Battalion of the Guards were blotted out of the Army List, and a second Battalion of the Guards was 'irrevocably' condemned to destruction.

A subsequent phase of the episode is curious. In correcting his speech for the Parliamentary Reports, Mr. Haldane interpolated the word 'home,' making the passage run 'the abolition of ten *Home*



Battalions.' The word was not, in fact, used by him, nor does its interpolation alter the case one jot. There is no distinction between 'Home Battalions'

STATIONS OF THE CONDEMNED BATTALIONS ON THE 8TH MARCH 1906, AND AT THE DATE OF THEIR DISSOLUTION, RESPECTIVELY		
Battalion	Where quartered in March 1906	Where quartered when dissolved
3rd Coldstreams	(Not yet destroyed) London	(Not yet destroyed)
3rd Scots Guards	London	London
3rd Battn. Northumberland Fus.	Bloemfontein, O. R. C.	Bordon Camp (Mar. 1907)
4th Battn. Northumberland Fus.	Limerick	Limerick (Nov. 1906)
3rd Battn. R. Warwickshire Regt.	Standerton, Transvaal	Wynberg C. C. for Aldershot (Mar. 1907)
4th Battn. R. Warwickshire Regt.	Curragh Camp	Curragh Camp (Nov. 1906)
3rd Battn. Lancashire Fus.	Pretoria, Transvaal	Fermoy (Nov. 1906)
4th Battn. Lancashire Fus.	Tipperary	Tipperary (Nov. 1906)
3rd Battn. Manchester Regt.	Middleburg, Transvaal	Guernsey (Nov. 1906)
4th Battn. Manchester Regt.	Aldershot	Aldershot (Nov. 1906)

and 'Foreign Battalions' in the British Army. The number of Battalions at home and abroad respectively constantly varies, and will always vary. A

Battalion is as much lost to the Army if it happens to be quartered at Cape Town at the time of its destruction, as if it is quartered at Colchester. The qualification added by Mr. Haldane was a 'distinction without a difference.' But this is not all. So utterly careless were the persons who instructed the Secretary of State, so utterly contemptuous is the War Office nowadays of the House of Commons, that nobody seems to have taken the trouble to find out where the doomed Battalions actually were quartered when the word 'home' was interpolated as an afterthought in the report. The facts are tabulated on the previous page. They speak for themselves.

It will be seen that six out of the ten Battalions were at home when Mr. Haldane gave his pledge, and nine out of the ten were at home when the actual disbandment took place. But this is a small matter compared with the grave question of the violation of a pledge.

The House of Commons was told in terms which admit of no misapprehension that ten Battalions were not going to be destroyed. The House of Commons believed that what they were told was true, and that ten Battalions were not going to be destroyed. Within a few months, by order of the Secretary of State, nine Battalions were destroyed.

## CHAPTER XXVI

## THE MYTH OF THE GENERAL STAFF ORDER

*'Deutschland, Deutschland über alles !'*

## THE MEMORANDUM AND THE ORDER

THE myth of the General Staff Order and the myth of the Horse and Field Artillery are so curious and instructive that they deserve and will receive special chapters. I propose to deal first with the characteristic myth of the General Staff Order. The story is as follows :—

On the 11th November 1905 a Memorandum, dealing with the question of the creation of a General Staff for the Army, was issued from the War Office. It was signed by the Secretary of State for War (Mr. Arnold-Forster) and addressed to the Chief of the General Staff (General Sir Neville Lyttelton, K.C.B.).

On the 12th September 1906 an Army Order on the same subject was issued by the then Secretary of State (Mr. Haldane). Addressing a gathering of Volunteers at Newcastle on the 15th September 1906, Mr. Haldane referred to this Order in the following terms :—

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' He thought too much had been made of the Order by the Press. It was no new conception. The original idea he was afraid must be labelled "Made in Germany." . . . He did not deny that it might have in it something of its origin from recent investigations on the other side of the German Ocean. It had many things that would not have been there unless we had had repeated and frequent conversations with the German General Staff.'<sup>1</sup>

Now all this is a pure myth. Mr. Haldane is evidently of opinion that nothing pleases the British public better than to be told that the War Office under its present rulers is 'run' by Germany. Possibly the satisfaction is not as deep and universal as the Secretary of State imagines.

But this particular Order has no more to do with the German General Staff than it has with the Lower House of Convocation.

The facts, which are perfectly simple, are as follows:—The Memorandum of the 11th November 1905 was written by the author at the War Office, and without reference to or consultation with the German General Staff. In the ordinary course the Memorandum was transmitted to the Department of the Chief of the General Staff for translation into the form of an Order; and was so translated within a very few weeks of the issue of the original document. The Order was kept in the Office till September 1906, not because it required modification, but apparently

<sup>1</sup> *Times* Report.

because some difference of opinion had arisen between two Departments in the War Office with regard to the question of who should make appointments, a difference which it took a long time to adjust.

In September the Order as drafted in December and January was issued. Not only is it not true to say that it was modified after reference to the German Staff, but as a matter of fact, save in one particular hereinafter noted, it was not modified at all.

So careless indeed was the statement of the Secretary of State that he failed to observe that the Order as issued actually contained a reference to the 'Welsh and Midland Command,' a Command which existed when the Order was drawn up, but had long ceased to exist when it was issued.<sup>1</sup>

But that there may be no room for doubt or controversy upon this matter, the two documents in question, viz. the Memorandum of November 1905 and the Order of September 1906, are here printed in parallel columns. It will be apparent at a glance that the Order is simply an official reproduction of the Memorandum, and that nothing whatever is due to any consultation between Mr. Haldane and his friends in Berlin,<sup>2</sup> and that the statement to that effect quoted above has no relation whatever to the facts.

<sup>1</sup> It appeared in the Army List for the last time in April 1906.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Haldane visited Berlin in the summer of 1906.

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MEMORANDUM BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR ADDRESSED TO THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF, 11TH NOVEMBER 1905

ARMY ORDER ISSUED 12TH SEPTEMBER 1906

1. At the meeting of the Army Council held on the 9th August 1905, certain general conclusions with regard to the formation of the General Staff were arrived at. These conclusions were as follows :

2. Officers of the General Staff should be selected on their own individual qualifications, and not on account of any appointment which they are holding, or for which they may be selected.<sup>1</sup>

3. The list of Officers *should* at present be small.

4. (c) Appointments should be for four years.

All appointments to the General Staff will be for four years.

5. (d) At the end of every four years from the date of

When an Officer vacates a General Staff appoint-

<sup>1</sup> Officers at present occupying posts specified in Appendix B.



his first appointment to the General Staff, the desirability of the retention of an Officer's name on the General Staff List should be considered.

6. (e) The general principle of accelerated promotion should be accepted, the question of the extent and nature of this promotion to be deferred for further consideration.

7. (f) The list of duties of the General Staff, as detailed in Appendices E and F of Army Order 30 of 1905, should be further amplified.

8. (g) There should not be a separate General Staff Corps.

9. (h) The possession of a Staff College Certificate, though most desirable, should not be an absolute *sine qua non* for being placed on the General Staff List.

ment his retention on the General Staff List will be subject to the decision of the Secretary of State advised by the Chief of the General Staff or the Commander-in-Chief in India as the case may be.

Approved service on the General Staff will be recognised by accelerated promotion.

See Appendix A, which sets out these duties.

As a general rule an Officer will not be eligible to have his name placed on the General Staff List unless he holds a Staff College Certificate, and unless he has at least eight years' service. But the guiding principle in the selection of Officers for this list will be

the possession of those qualifications which render them fitted for the performance of the duties of the General Staff.

10. The principles approved by the Council must now be regarded as governing the composition and duties of the General Staff, and the time has come for taking action in accordance with these decisions. It is desirable that in carrying out the work entrusted to you by the Army Council you should have before you a clear statement of the objects for which the General Staff is to be formed and the duties which it is to perform.

11. It is impossible to secure continuity of policy in Army administration without reasoned and well-ordered thought, and it is with a view to securing this desideratum that the formation of a General Staff has been undertaken by the Army Council. At present, as in the past, every Officer in the Army has his own opinion on

every military subject, the net result being that there are almost as many opinions as there are Officers. Hence the advice tendered to the Secretary of State by his responsible Military Adviser is the individual advice and opinion of the Officer tendering it, and it is *not* the carefully balanced opinion, after mature thought and deliberation, of a collective body of experts. Thus, continuity of thought, of purpose and of action are wholly impossible, and in their place we find disjointed and unconnected plans. No true 'military opinion' does or can exist.

12. There are, moreover, many duties which are now not performed at all, or which are insufficiently performed, and which ought in the future to be carried out by Officers of the General Staff.

The objects to be kept in view in forming such a Staff are as follows :

13. (1) To gather the ablest men in the Army

together, and by some system of advancement and promotion to make sure that the fortunes of the Army are always in their hands.

14. (2) By means of these men, to form a school of military thought, which shall be abreast, or ahead of that of any other Army.

15. From this it follows that the Officers of the General Staff should be the ablest and most energetic Officers of the Army, and should be in the prime of life. Their duties may be defined as the duties of war and training for war.

16. The possession of a Staff College Certificate, though most desirable, will not be an absolute *sine qua non* for selection.

17. In an Army such as ours there must be exceptional cases in which Officers who have not obtained the certificate should clearly be

With these objects in view the General Staff will be drawn from the Officers of the Army who may be considered most likely to prove capable of forming a school of progressive military thought.

See No. 9 above.

placed on the General Staff List.

18. So, also, administrative experience will be a valuable but not an indispensable qualification for admission to the General Staff.

19. The eligibility of an Officer for the General Staff should not be affected by his Army rank. In one regiment an Officer with eleven years' service may be still a subaltern, in another an Officer of four years' service may have attained the rank of captain. Some limitation is necessary, but it will be based upon length of service and not upon Army rank.

20. The following are the general lines on which the formation of the General Staff will proceed :

21. The General Staff will not form a separate corps.

Of these qualifications experience on the Administrative Staff, though not indispensable, will not be disregarded.

Appointments to the posts specified in Appendix B will be made from a special list of Officers considered well qualified for such employment, termed 'A General Staff List.'

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22. Officers will be selected on their own individual qualification, and not on account of any appointment which they are holding, or for which they may be selected. The list of selected Officers will at present be small.

23. Appointments will be for four years. At the end of every four years from the date of his first appointment to the General Staff, the desirability of the retention of an Officer's name on the General Staff List will be considered.

24. It is clear that the organisation of the General Staff should proceed with care, and a probationary period will be desirable in all cases. This period, in the case of those to be immediately selected, should not be less than one year.

25. Subject to a first list being drawn up and approved by the Army Council generally, all future selections for, and promotions in, the General Staff will be recommended

Officers at present occupying posts specified in Appendix B will not necessarily be selected for the General Staff List.

All appointments to the General Staff will be for four years, after which an Officer, if below the rank of substantive Lieutenant-Colonel, will return to regimental duty for a period of not less than one year.

The General Staff List will be drawn up from time to time, revised by the Army Council, in consultation with the Selection Board, and with the Commander-in-Chief in India.



by the Chief of the General Staff alone, without the intervention of the Selection Board or of the Army Council. In no other manner can the Staff be made homogeneous and its action inspired by a single purpose.

This paragraph in the Order of 1906 is certainly not taken from the Memorandum of 1905. On the contrary, it is in direct conflict with it. Wherever it came from, it certainly did not come from Germany. It would almost seem as if it were the outcome of a prolonged difference of opinion between two departments of the War Office, in which the stronger but less enlightened was triumphant. It will be observed that the point at issue is whether the Chief of the General Staff shall or shall not be master in his own house. That he ought to be if the General Staff is to be more than a name, is certain. It seems probable that the paragraph in its present form was inserted to relieve the apprehensions of those heads of departments who feared that officers serving under them might not receive their due share of nominations to the General Staff.

26. It is evident that the Chief of the General Staff must have absolute power over all the Officers of the

General Staff. He will be as free as possible from ordinary office routine work, but must be the sole adviser of the Secretary of State on all matters of strategy or of military operations. He will, of course, remain a member of the Committee of Imperial Defence. He will also be charged, as I have already indicated, with the selection and personal supervision and training of the Officers of the General Staff.

27. There is little doubt that ultimately the position of the Chief of the General Staff will become so important that, in order to secure continuity of action and ideas, it may be necessary to extend his tenure of office beyond that laid down in the present regulations.

28. It is necessary to define in some way the duties of the General Staff, and in the Army Order of 1st Jan. 1905, which gave effect to the recommendations of the War Office Reconstitution Committee, certain duties are assigned

These duties are also defined in the Appendix to the Order of 1906.

to that Department both in peace and war in Appendices E and F. No definition of those duties, however, can pretend to be exhaustive, and some elasticity of interpretation must be allowed. It is evident that, though certain posts may be reserved for Officers who are members of the General Staff, it will (apart from these exceptions) be altogether wrong to associate the Officers of the General Staff with particular posts. It would, moreover, be easy to draw a definition of Staff duties which would deprive the Chief of the General Staff of the very wide liberty in dealing with his Officers which he ought to possess.

29. The Chief of the General Staff ought to be able to prepare Officers for special work months, it may be years, ahead. For instance, an Officer having the requisite qualification for a particular class of work should be instructed to acquaint himself with the language

necessary to carry out that work, or with any other special branch of knowledge which will enable him to serve efficiently in the post to which he is ultimately appointed.

30. The reward for good service on the General Staff will be accelerated promotion. Such promotion will be given as a matter of course to all Officers who, having been placed on the General Staff List, have completed a term of employment and are considered sufficiently meritorious to be retained upon the List for further employment. First appointment to the List will confer no claim to promotion, which should be a reward for successful service, and not a preliminary to such service. The principle of accelerated promotion being accepted, the question of the form in which it should be given remains to be determined.

31. This question is not without difficulty. The strict regimental system of our Army interposes ob-

Approved service on the General Staff will be recognised by accelerated promotion.

Such accelerated promotion will be bestowed in ordinary cases in the form of a 'Brevet' up to the

stacles in the case of Cavalry and Infantry, which do not arise in the case of other branches of the Service or in foreign Armies. These obstacles cannot be ignored. There can be little doubt that substantive promotion without any conditions as to whether or not an Officer shall go back to his regiment is, in theory, by far the best and most logical proceeding; but the objections which may be taken from the regimental point of view are apparent.

32. On the whole it would seem that the system of 'Brevet,' up to the rank of Lieut.-Colonel, and substantive promotion above that rank, is likely to be the best solution of this difficult problem.

It is not impossible that in the future a time may come when there will be an interchange of Officers between Cavalry and Infantry, Engineers and Artillery, &c. Hitherto the whole tendency of our military education has been to segregate Officers of the various arms. I cannot

rank of Lieut.-Colonel, and above that rank by selection for the rank of substantive Colonel.

help hoping that progress may eventually be made in the direction of interchangeability.

The above are the main points by which you should be guided in initiating the formation of the General Staff, and you will now, therefore, take the necessary steps for giving effect to the decision of the Army Council in accordance with the terms of this minute.

H. O. A.-F.

11-11-05.

It will be seen that the passages which we have quoted from the Order of September 1906 are simply, with one exception, mere paraphrases and repetitions of portions of the Memorandum of 1905. They certainly were not 'Made in Germany,' and they would have been exactly where they are even though those 'repeated and frequent conversations with the German General Staff' had never taken place.

It is obvious, therefore, that the Teutonic wisdom must be contained in those portions of the Order which have not been quoted. Let us see what they are. They are as follows:—

1. The General Staff of the Army falls into two principal divisions, viz.—

- (a) The General Staff at Army Headquarters.
- (b) The General Staff in Commands and Districts.



2. The functions of the former are to advise on the strategical distribution of the Army, to supervise the education of Officers, and the training and preparation of the Army for war, to study military schemes, offensive and defensive, to collect and collate military intelligence, to direct the general policy in Army matters and to secure continuity of action in the execution of that policy.

3. The functions of the latter are to assist the Officers on whose staffs they are serving in promoting military efficiency, especially in regard to the education of Officers and the training of the troops, and to aid them in carrying out the policy prescribed by Army Headquarters.

This statement of functions is common to both documents and is taken from a common source. There is clearly no mystery about these obvious definitions.

Para. 6. The establishment of the General Staff, exclusive of India, i.e. the detailed list of those posts which will constitute the General Staff appointments of the Army, is given in Appendix B.

Evidently the German mystery does not lurk here. *Q.E.D.*

This is all. In other words the introduction of Germany and the German General Staff in this matter is absolutely unnecessary and unwarranted. The point is not of great importance, save as showing how necessary it is to receive statements made by the War Office under the present régime with caution, and how desirable it is not to render too great homage to a 'pose' however confident and authoritative.

## CHAPTER XXVII

## THE NEW STRIKING FORCE

*'Much ado about nothing.'*

## THE AUTHORS OF THE INCREASE

THE country has on many occasions during the last three years been surprised and gratified to learn that for the first time it possesses a real Expeditionary Force of nearly 160,000 men, ready 'to go anywhere and do anything' on the pressing of a button. The creation of this powerful Army has naturally given great satisfaction, though the satisfaction has not been universal. The very magnitude of the Force has been sufficient to condemn it in the eyes of those who think that our military preparations err on the side of excess. Sir Charles Dilke has boldly declared that if the Force existed, it would be too great, and should be reduced. But he has derived comfort from the reflexion that, except on paper, it does not exist.

As there is evidently a good deal of misconception with regard to what this Striking Force—or Expeditionary Force—really is, a few words of explanation

will not be out of place. Mr. Haldane has over and over again declared that the number of troops available for oversea service is greater now than it has ever been ; and he has left it to be inferred that this result is due to the policy which he has adopted. This is an error, as will appear when we come to examine the origin of the Force.

It would, however, be a crying scandal if more men were not available in 1909 than on the occasion of our last mobilisation in 1899. Between 1899, when Lord Lansdowne commenced the task of strengthening the Army, and November 1905, when the present Government took office, there were added to the Regular Army 18 Battalions and 64 Batteries of Horse and Field Artillery. The total addition of numbers between January 1, 1889, and January 1, 1906, was as follows :—

	Increase.
Household Cavalry . . . .	93
Cavalry of the Line . . . .	2,115
Horse and Field Artillery . . .	12,201
Garrison Artillery . . . .	1,093
Royal Engineers . . . .	2,922
Foot Guards . . . .	771
Infantry of the Line . . . .	2,939
Army Service Corps . . . .	3,376
R.A. Medical Corps . . . .	1,721
Army Ordnance Corps . . . .	1,115
	<hr/>
	28,346
	<hr/>

## THE AUTHORS OF THE DECREASE

But not only was this large addition made to the Colour Strength, the Reserve was increased to an unprecedented figure. Owing partly to the increase of the Colour Strength, but principally to the Short Service enlistments introduced by Mr. Brodrick, the Reserve is now 39,000 stronger than it was in 1899. It would indeed be curious if, with the addition of no less than 67,000, no more troops were available now than ten years ago. If such were not the case, the fact would indicate that some very sinister influence must have intervened to stultify the good work of years of patient effort. Such an influence has intervened, but it has not yet been at work long enough to sterilise and stultify entirely the work of the past. We have already seen that the Army with the Colours has lost 18,363 officers and men; that 9 Battalions have been destroyed; that 32 Field Batteries have been permanently immobilised; that the Artillery has lost over 7,000 officers and men, and the Royal Engineers over 1,300. The inevitable reduction of the Reserve has not yet begun: the duty of facing the situation which will arise when that reduction begins will be left, like so many other unpleasant tasks, to a future Administration. But it is obvious that it is not the reduction of the Regular Army by over 18,000 men that has made it stronger than it was before. Up to the present time the reductions due to the new

policy have not quite overtaken the increase due to the policy which has been abandoned. We ought therefore, as a matter of course, to be able to put more men into the field than in 1899; but the reduction of units has already taken effect, and may prove very serious. In 1902 there were but 8 Line Battalions left in Great Britain. But since that date, 8 Line Battalions have been destroyed. One of the clearest lessons which the war ought to have taught us has been disregarded.

### THE STRENGTH OF THE STRIKING FORCE

It is obvious from the facts which have been above recited that there ought to be a very large increase in the number of Regular troops available for service abroad, and that if there is not, the fact is solely due to the policy of the present Administration.

And now let us examine the so-called 'Striking Force,' for the creation of which so much merit has been claimed. Speaking in the House of Commons on the 30th July 1906, the Secretary of State for War explained the character of the Force which he proposed to create.

'As a result of the Government's proposals,' [said he,] 'we should be in a position to readily mobilise for service oversea a Force consisting of 4 Cavalry Brigades, and 6 Divisions (each of 3 Brigades), with

the necessary troops for lines of communication, or roughly, 150,000 officers and men.

'Of this total, 50,000 will be Regulars serving with the Colours, about 70,000 will be Reservists, and about 30,000 men employed and trained on a militia basis. . . . An army so organised would be, in point of numbers, available for taking the field oversea, nearly 50 per cent. stronger than any Expeditionary Force which we have hitherto attempted to organise.'

A Return giving the composition of the proposed Force was issued by the War Office, the total number of officers and men there shown being 159,620.

An examination of this Return suggests some curious reflexions. As has been pointed out, if we were not able to dispatch a much larger force in 1906 or 1909 than was possible in 1899, we ought to be very much ashamed of ourselves, and the fact must be due to the mischievous undoing of the good work of past years. But the speech of the Secretary of State and the figures given in the Return render it very doubtful whether, after all, we can do much better in 1909 than we did in 1899. It is certain that the boast that we are in a position to dispatch an Expeditionary Force 50 per cent. stronger than any we have hitherto attempted to organise, must be accepted with a great deal of caution. Facts are stubborn things, and the following facts are set out in the Report of the War Commission, where anyone who desires may verify them.



## WHAT HAPPENED IN 1899

In the autumn of 1899 the garrison of South Africa numbered 9,940 officers and men. By the 11th October of the same year reinforcements to the number of 12,456 had been dispatched from the United Kingdom. Between November 1899 and the end of July 1900, no less than 155,535 officers and men were sent from the British establishment alone. 22,987 were dispatched from the same source between the 1st August 1900 and April 1901. An additional 22,746 left during the remainder of 1901, and in 1902 a final contingent of 20,260 officers and men was dispatched, making a total of 228,171 Regular troops from the British establishment alone.

It is significant and important to note that by the end of July 1900, no less than 167,991 Regular troops had been dispatched, exclusive of reinforcements from India. And be it observed that in addition we had the whole of the Militia, of which the greater part actually served in South Africa. Mr. Haldane has now destroyed the Militia, and the total of the Expeditionary Force includes its remains.

## THE COMPOSITION OF THE STRIKING FORCE

Now let us see what is to be the composition of the great Expeditionary Force which we owe to 'clear thinking.' It appears from the speech of the Secretary of State that out of the total of 159,620

officers and men, only 50,000 are to be furnished by the Regular Army with the Colours. 70,000 are to be Reservists, an extraordinary and, in the opinion of many officers, an unsafe proportion. 30,000 are to be 'on a militia basis,' that is to say, men without any serious military training, or wholly untrained men, whose qualifications and whose duties have been described by the Secretary of State as being similar to those of Messrs. Pickfords' drivers. These may be very good men, but they will not be soldiers; moreover, it does not appear that at the present time they exist. When it is remembered that out of the total Regular Force dispatched to South Africa only 80,000, or 35 per cent., were Reservists, whereas in the new Force the number of Reservists and casuals together is to be no less than 69 per cent., it is difficult to perceive where the great gain has taken place. Be it remembered also that in 1899-1900 the Reservists were real soldiers. Whether they will be so on the occasion of our next mobilisation is exceedingly doubtful. As long as the present great Reserve lasts, it will be possible to mobilise the Infantry Battalions from that source, but, as has been frequently pointed out in these pages, the present great Reserve is the outcome of a policy which has been abandoned, and as soon as that Reserve disappears, and we have at our disposal only the natural product of a reduced Long Service Army, we shall have to resort to the Special Reservists, who, in the opinion

of the military authorities at any rate, will not be real soldiers at all.

#### AN ARGUMENT *A FORTIORI*

On this point there is no room for doubt. Among the many foolish and ill-considered statements which have been made in a hurry by those who in their zeal to support the new system have thought it necessary to destroy that which preceded it, is that which represents Short Service soldiers of two years' Colour service as unfit to take the field. The opinion is singularly inept in view of the fact that two years' Colour service is the term prescribed for nearly every army in the world except our own, and that to condemn men who have had no longer period of training is to declare that nearly half of the Brigade of Guards will be unfit for war on mobilisation, a statement which is refuted by its own inherent absurdity. But inherent absurdity is no bar to those who must at any cost provide an opinion which will fit the situation. Thus it is that we find the following curious passage in the Memorandum of the Secretary of State for War which appeared on the 30th July 1906. Defending the Cardwell System and attacking the Short Service Battalions which were to be composed in part of men of two years' Colour Service, Mr. Haldane informed us that—

'In the opinion of the great majority of the military advisers of the Government, Battalions mobilised in

accordance with the Cardwell System—that is, containing Reservists of seven years' Colour Service—are greatly to be preferred to Battalions composed largely of inexperienced and partially trained Reservists, who must necessarily be quite inferior to seasoned men who have already gone through a substantial period of service abroad.'

Now let us see where this important and unanimous military opinion lands us. Reservists who have served two years with the Colours in a full Battalion, under their own officers and their own non-commissioned officers, and who have subsequently been called out for training with their units, must be regarded as 'inexperienced,' 'partially trained,' and necessarily 'quite inferior' to the ordinary first-class Reservist. But if that be so, if, as one of the War Office apologists has told us, men who have served with the Colours for two years are 'unworthy of the name of a British soldier,' what are we to say of the men who are to take their place? What value do the 'expert military advisers [of the Government]' place upon Reservists whose maximum period of training with the Colours (if service in little squads in a desolate depot can be dignified by that name) will have been six months, who will have never seen their officers or their non-commissioned officers, who will form no part of a real unit, and have never gone through 'a substantial period of service' abroad or anywhere else? Of course, the fact is that when the military authorities unanimously laid down two years' Colour Service as the minimum

training for the soldier, they were expressing military opinion : when they were recommending, or what is perhaps worse, countenancing, the introduction into our Field Army of thousands of boys of six months' training given under the worst possible conditions, they were not expressing military opinion at all, but were falling in with a political scheme which has nothing whatever to do with war.

Enough has been said in this chapter to show that, like every other statement that has been made with regard to the new system, the official declaration that the system has supplied us, or can ever supply us with an Expeditionary Force of unparalleled strength and exceptional quality, requires to be examined with great care. That we ought to be able to provide an Expeditionary Force of 160,000 men is obvious ; that if we are able to do so, we owe our ability wholly to the Administrations of Lord Lansdowne and Lord Midleton is equally obvious, and that if we are not able to do so, our inability is the direct outcome of the destructive policy of the last three years.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

## THE HORSE AND FIELD ARTILLERY MYTH

**'A bad workman finds fault with his tools.'**

## GOOD ENOUGH FOR THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

IT is only those who have some special acquaintance with Army organisation who can realise how frequently and completely the House of Commons has been misled during the last three years by the official statements which have been made by the Secretary of State or on his behalf. It is evidently the opinion of those who furnish the material for those statements that the House of Commons being as a rule singularly ill-informed with regard to military matters, it is desirable and legitimate to take full advantage of that ignorance. On no other hypothesis is it possible to account for many of the statements which they put into the mouth of the Secretary of State. A remarkable example of this undesirable practice is to be found in the declaration with regard to the Horse and Field Artillery first made by Mr. Haldane in



1906, and subsequently repeated by him on various occasions when the necessities of a speech seemed to require the introduction of a strong statement. According to Mr. Haldane such was the condition of the Artillery in 1905 that in January 1906 he could only mobilise 42 Field Batteries.

Now let us see what are the facts. To begin with, the Return issued on the motion of Lord Midleton in November 1908 shows that between October 1905 and October 1908, the strength of the Horse and Field Artillery, instead of increasing was diminished by 1,811 officers and men; in other words, by the strength of 2 Brigades of Royal Field Artillery with their Ammunition Columns complete. That is Mr. Haldane's contribution to the actual strengthening of the Horse and Field Artillery. It must not be forgotten, however, that his activities have not ended here, and that during the period referred to he has also deprived the country of the services of no less than 5,442 officers and men of the Royal Garrison Artillery. In other words, we have lost since 'clear thinking' came into operation 7,253 trained Artillerymen.

#### THE ARTILLERY BETWEEN 1899 AND 1906

Now let us see what was the action of the Administration on which Mr. Haldane has pronounced his censure. What is the truth with regard to the condition of the Artillery in 1905, and who is

responsible for any improvement which may have taken place since that date?

We have seen that Mr. Haldane has got rid of 1,811 officers and men of the Horse and Field Artillery. Let us now inquire what was done by the predecessors whom he so hastily condemns. As early as 1899 Lord Lansdowne, knowing that the Artillery was insufficient, sanctioned the addition of 15 Batteries. His policy was continued and extended by his successors. Between 1899 and 1906, 6 Batteries of Horse Artillery, 58 Batteries of Field Artillery, and 5 depots were added to the strength of the Army. So much for the question of addition or reduction. Whatever addition there has been it is due solely to Mr. Haldane's predecessors. The reduction is as purely his own work.

Now let us examine the statement that in January 1906 only 42 Field Batteries could be mobilised. During the war in South Africa, there were actually serving in the field 10 Batteries of Royal Horse Artillery, 45 Batteries of Royal Field Artillery, and 12 Ammunition Columns. Of the Royal Horse Artillery Batteries two, and of the Field Batteries three, came from India. In January 1899 the strength of the Horse and Field Artillery was 19,053, the Reserve 5,320.<sup>1</sup> In January 1906 the strength of

<sup>1</sup> The Reserve of Garrison and Field Artillery is not distinguished in the Return for 1899. The number given above is proportionate to the strength.

the Horse and Field Artillery was 31,254, and of the Reserve 7,286. A total of 38,540, and an increase of 14,257 over the numbers available in 1899. If we deduct from the total personnel in 1906 the numbers on the Indian Establishment, viz. 10,852, we have 27,688 men remaining on the British Establishment.

According to the answer given by Mr. Haldane on July 6, 1908, a Battery of Horse Artillery, omitting details from other branches of the service, requires 214 officers and men.

The Ammunition Column for a Battery R.H.A. requires 120 all ranks, less 7 drivers A.S.C., or 113 net, making the total personnel for the Battery and Ammunition Column—

$$\begin{array}{r} 214 \\ 113 \\ \hline 327 \text{ net.} \end{array}$$

The 17 R.H.A. Batteries on the British Establishment will therefore require 5,559 all ranks.

There will thus remain available for the R.F.A.—

$$\begin{array}{r} 27,668 \\ 5,559 \\ \hline 22,109 \end{array}$$

A Brigade R.F.A., including Ammunition Column, requires 964 all ranks, from which we must deduct details from other branches 33, leaving net 931.

The 50 Brigades on the British Establishment will require 46,541, showing a deficit of 24,421.

But the 22,009 will suffice for 23 Brigades complete with Ammunition Columns or for 69 Batteries, leaving 81 Batteries unprovided for.

But between the 1st January 1906 and 1st October 1908, there was an addition of 5,695 men to the Reserve, sufficient to man 6 more Brigades, or 18 Batteries, making the total available Batteries 87, and Batteries not available 62.

It will be seen, therefore, that the statement made by the Secretary of State to the effect that, in January 1906, he could only mobilise 42 Batteries, is absurd. In 1899, the number of Horse and Field Batteries on the British Establishment actually serving in Africa was 50. Since that date, as has been shown, 19,952 officers and men have been added to the Horse and Field Artillery up to 1st October 1908, or up to January 1906, 14,257.

The number added between 1899 and January 1906 was enough to mobilise 3 Batteries Royal Horse Artillery with their Ammunition Columns and 14 Brigades, or 42 Batteries Royal Field Artillery with Ammunition Columns.

It must be remembered that these figures have been taken on the assumption that all the Batteries and Ammunition Columns are manned on the highest scale made necessary by the introduction of the quick-firing gun. But, as a matter of fact, there

were no Batteries so armed in 1906, and the strength of both Batteries and Ammunition Columns would have been much less than that which has been assumed in the above calculations.

It is not suggested that either in 1906 or at the present time every man on the rolls would be available for foreign service; large deductions must be made on this account, and the figures given above must be accepted subject to this modification; but deductions on this account are a constant which must be reckoned with at all times, and which, therefore, does not affect the comparison. The fact remains that between 1899 and 1906, 14,257 men were added to the Horse and Field Artillery, that since that date there has been an addition of over 4,000 men to the Reserve, and the whole of this addition has been made in spite of and not because of the policy of 'clear thinking' of which Mr. Haldane has so often claimed the monopoly.

#### THE ARTILLERY SECTION OF THE SPECIAL RESERVE

I am well aware that something has been done to increase the strength of the Horse and Field Artillery on mobilisation by the institution of the Artillery Section of the Special Reserve. As I have often pointed out, this plan of utilising a part of the redundant personnel of the Artillery Militia for the

purpose of making up deficiencies in the Ammunition Columns in time of war, is one of the very few proposals of his predecessor which Mr Haldane has not repudiated. The plan is on the whole a good one, provided it be regarded as a make-shift only. If it had been possible for the great master of 'clear thinking' to let anything alone, the process of transferring men from the Militia and Volunteer Artillery to the Army Reserve would have begun in 1906 instead of 1908.

It must be clearly understood, however, that the practice of reinforcing the Batteries and making up the Ammunition Columns with partially trained and inferior soldiers is not a sound one. Despite statements to the contrary which have been made in the House of Commons and elsewhere, the practice has not been adopted, and would on no account be tolerated, save as an emergency measure, in any of the great armies of the world. It is from the drivers and from the Ammunition Columns that the casualties in the Batteries must be made good. The skilled personnel will be the first to suffer in action, and if it cannot be replaced, the Batteries will rapidly deteriorate, and will soon cease to have any military value.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting and curious to note that the military correspondent of the *Times*, who was for so long an ardent supporter of the official plan, has now adopted the view of the author. He recommends the reduction of the number of Special Reservists from 13,000 to 6,000, and the enlistment of a certain



FRENCH FOUR-GUN BATTERIES AND BRITISH  
TWO-GUN BATTERIES

We have not yet quite exhausted the subject of the Artillery. The following is a remarkable example of the danger of half truths.

The announcement in 1906 that the personnel of the Royal Artillery was to be reduced by nearly 8,000 officers and men, and that Field Batteries were to be reduced to a two-gun establishment, naturally caused some alarm and provoked some criticism in Parliament. It was desirable to dissipate this alarm, and to meet this criticism. Accordingly, on the 12th July 1906, Mr. Haldane informed the House of Commons that the French War Office had decided to reduce the whole of the Batteries of the French Field Artillery to four guns. Here, indeed, was a very relevant and important statement eminently calculated to remove the fears and to meet the objections of those who saw with regret so large a proportion of our scanty Artillery Force reduced to impotence.

But if the whole story, which is the true story, had been told, a very different effect would have been produced. It is true that the French have reduced their Batteries from six guns to four. But

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number of men for three years with the Colours. This frank acceptance of a principle for which he has so long contended is very gratifying to the author. (See Col. A'Court Repington's address to the Aldershot Military Society, 27th January 1909.)

why? Because they thought they were too strong? Because they desired to turn one-third of their Batteries into training schools for Volunteers? Not at all. The French know better. Their one great fear is lest they should be outclassed and overborne by the German Artillery. The reduction was made, as any soldier in the War Office could have told Mr. Haldane, with the sole object of making the French Artillery stronger. For that reason, and for that reason alone, was the reduction sanctioned. The French Artillerymen believe that, in view of the increased number of wagons necessitated by the introduction of the quick-firing gun, it is better to reduce the length of the unit, thus rendering it more mobile, and reducing the space occupied by it in column of route.

It is true that this change has led to a temporary diminution of the number of guns per thousand men; and anyone who is familiar with the French military literature is aware that this shortage is a matter of the greatest concern to the French authorities. The only question at issue is as to how completely and how quickly the shortage may be made good. It will be seen, therefore, that the action of the French War Office furnishes no analogy whatever for that of our own. It was dictated by wholly different considerations; it was carried out in a wholly different manner; and it was adopted, not with the view of reducing any French Batteries to

impotence, but of making all the French Batteries more effective.

It is obvious that if the true story had been told to the House of Commons the words used by the Secretary of State for War would have been perfectly meaningless, or at least would have had a meaning very different from that which they conveyed, and were intended to convey. But it seems a pity that the truth was not told, even at the cost of abandoning an effective Parliamentary statement.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### MILITARY OPINION ON THE TERRITORIAL ARTILLERY

'Learn from expert inquirers after truth;  
Whose only care, might truth presume to speak,  
Is not to find what they profess to seek.'

*Cowper, 'Tirotcinium.'*

#### WHAT SOLDIERS REALLY THINK

IT would be impossible to close this list of instances in which Parliament and the public have been deceived and misled without a reference to the correspondence which took place between the Secretary of State for War and the author in March 1908. The correspondence is reprinted in the Appendix (p. 257). It will be seen that it refers to a very important matter, namely, the value in war time of the new Territorial Horse and Field Artillery.

It was natural enough that when it was first announced by Mr. Haldane that it was proposed to reduce no less than 33 Batteries of Regular Artillery to a two-gun training establishment—in other words, to make over 30 per cent. of the Field Artillery on the British Establishment useless for war—considerable

surprise and alarm was felt by those who know how insufficient our Regular Artillery is, and how essential it is that it should be largely increased instead of being diminished. The surprise and alarm created by the announcement of this policy of destruction were by no means diminished when it was further announced that as a compensation for the Regular Batteries which were to be rendered useless, 172 Territorial Batteries of Horse and Field Artillery were to be created, and were to be tied by law to the one place where they were least likely to be wanted, namely, the soil of the United Kingdom.

But the most alarming feature of the whole scheme was, undoubtedly, the fact that the training of these new Batteries was to be of an entirely illusory character, that they were to have no regular officers, and were to remain without horses on the outbreak of war.

The opinions expressed as to the folly of the proceeding were numerous and emphatic. Lord Roberts, with a lifetime's experience as a gunner, spoke out boldly and bluntly in his place in the House of Lords as follows:—

*I cannot alter by one iota the opinion I expressed in this House two months ago, that the Territorial Artillery, on such a scale as is proposed, would entail vast expense to this country in peace, without the hope of any corresponding return in war. I repeat that I consider that it would be not only valueless, but a source of danger both in peace and war—in peace, because the fact of its existence*

*would lull the public into a false sense of security ; in war, because of its inability to afford the necessary support to the other arms, or to cope with the trained artillery by which it would be opposed. . . . Knowing as I do that it is hopeless even to expect them to become efficient enough to be trusted in the field, and as I have shown that by the scheme they would be the only artillery available for home defence, I consider it my duty to use every effort to prevent the wholesale adoption of a measure which I regard as fraught with possible disaster to this country.*<sup>1</sup>

The military correspondent of the *Times* was even more emphatic in his condemnation of the new Force. He spoke with weight, in the first place because he had just had before him an object lesson in the matter of Artillery Training ; and in the second place because he voiced the opinion of every Artillery officer at home and abroad up to the time of his pronouncement.

It was on his return from witnessing the practice of the Royal Artillery with the new Q.F. 18-pounder gun that he was moved to write as follows :—

*' If any politician believes he is going to obtain officers fit to command modern quick-firing batteries from among people who do not give up their whole time to the study and practice of the science of artillery, the first battle in which these persons are engaged will disabuse him of his belief. Half-trained officers and half-trained men have no business to touch these guns. They will not get half the results obtained by the trained hands ; they will get no useful result at all. Better far*

<sup>1</sup> House of Lords, 18th May 1908. '



*to arm them with ancient smooth bores and the simple contrivances of museum artillery, for then, at least, their efforts would not be entirely wasted.'*

It must be borne in mind that the 15-pounder which has been placed in the hands of the Territorial Artillery is both more complicated and less effective than the 18-pounder. Sir Ian Hamilton, fresh from observing artillery in action in Manchuria, publicly announced that in his opinion three Batteries of the new Artillery could barely be expected to hold their own against one Regular Battery, and there is probably not an Artillery officer in the Service who knows anything of his trade who does not regard this estimate on the part of a distinguished Infantry officer as almost absurdly sanguine. These frank expressions of opinion were obviously most unpalatable to the Army Council. Public opinion was naturally moved by such a unanimity of condemnation, and it became necessary to remove the unfavourable impression at all costs. The Secretary of State threw himself into the task with characteristic energy. He declared that military opinion was in fact strongly in favour of the experiment; he cited by name two officers of distinction actually serving in the War Office, who, he declared, were advocates of the creation of Volunteer Field Artillery, and he instructed or permitted his representative in the House of Lords to declare that he could not produce any Official Minute or Report recommending the

creation of Volunteer Field Artillery solely because the question had not been officially considered, and consequently no such report existed.

## SUPPRESSIO VERI

Now let us see what are the facts. When Lord Portsmouth declared that no Committee had recommended the course pursued, and that consequently there were no records to produce, he was technically correct. No War Office Committee ever did anything so foolish and unsoldierly as to recommend the practical destruction of 33 Regular Batteries, and the creation of a great force of partially trained gunners in its place.

But when the Under-Secretary of State made, and the Secretary of State approved, this declaration, these Ministers were well aware that a War Office Committee had been appointed to deal with this very subject, that it had reported only a few weeks before the answer was given to the House of Lords; and that, after very full inquiry, it had unanimously condemned such a scheme. It is greatly to be regretted that, possessing this knowledge, the two Ministers in question combined to withhold what they knew from Parliament, for the knowledge was very relevant to the question asked.

Again, it is to be regretted that when, in order to find some sort of military backing for his unfortunate scheme, Mr. Haldane cited two distinguished officers

whose names were entitled to carry weight, he omitted to add that he had under his hand the printed opinions of those very officers given only a few weeks before in most elaborate form, and to mention that these printed opinions which he possessed then and possesses now, were in direct contradiction of those which he had attributed to the officers in question.<sup>1</sup>

#### A STATEMENT AND A CHALLENGE

It was my opinion when I raised this question in Parliament, and it is my opinion still, that the public was deliberately and unjustifiably misled in this matter. The proof of my assertion lies in Mr. Haldane's hands. It is to be found in the official documents which I have named before, and which, in order that there may be no mistake, I will name again.

The true opinions of the principal military authorities at the War Office with regard to the question of Volunteer Field Artillery are to be found in the following official papers now in the War Office—

(1) Minute by the Secretary of State addressed to the Chief of the General Staff, and dated September 29th, 1905.

<sup>1</sup> It is, of course, impossible for me to assert that within three months these distinguished officers, with no new facts to guide them, did not entirely change their opinions, and were ardent advocates in February 1906 of that which they had so unsparingly and so scientifically condemned in 1905. But that in November 1905 they did hold, and did express, those opinions, is a fact which is altogether beyond dispute.

(2) Minute by the Director of Military Training to the Chief of the General Staff, dated October 6th, 1908.

(3) Minute by the Chief of the General Staff to the Master-General of the Ordnance, dated October 7th, 1905.

(4) A Minute by the Master-General of the Ordnance to the Chief of the General Staff, dated October 12th, 1905.

(5) Proceedings of a Conference held on November 9th, 1905, under the presidency of General MacKinnon, Director of Auxiliary Forces.

(6) Minute by Col. May, Assistant Director of Military Training, to the Chief of the General Staff, dated November 10th, 1905.

(7) Minute by the Chief of the General Staff to the Secretary of State, dated November 13th, 1905.

(8) Minute by the Secretary of State, dated November 15th, 1905.

(9) Precis No. 264, laid before the Army Council.

The opinions contained in these papers do not coincide with those attributed by Mr. Haldane to his military advisers. On the contrary, they are in direct conflict with those opinions, but they do coincide with the views of sane Artillery officers in every army in the world.

Mr. Haldane has refused to produce, or to allow me to produce, these documents, on the ground that their production would be 'undesirable in the public interest.'

## THE DANGER OF BEING IN A HURRY

I decline to accept this reason, and I do not regard it as the true one. Mr. Haldane has never had the slightest scruple about producing official papers. He has himself cited officers by name, while prohibiting the quotation of their views. He has actually gone so far as to obtain from officers serving, papers prepared in hot haste for special use in Parliament.

But all this haste, all this zeal to prove that which will never be proved, can avail nothing. There is not an army in the world in which the underlying principle of Mr. Haldane's artillery reform would not be scouted as midsummer madness.

I decline to believe that it is in the interests of the Army, or in the interests of the Artillery in war, that the truth has been withheld. On the contrary, I believe that it has been withheld, and is still withheld, because its publication would render a continuance of the new policy impossible. I once more ask that the prohibition under which I have been laid may be withdrawn, so that the truth may appear.

## CONCLUSION

Many more instances might be cited of inaccurate and misleading statements such as those which have already been described, but enough has

been said to demonstrate the correctness of the proposition which the last three chapters in this book are intended to enforce. At the risk of reiteration it may be well to restate that proposition. It is this :

During the last three years many statements have been made by, or on behalf of, the War Office, which have been calculated to mislead, and have misled, a very large number of persons. That the tendency of all these misrepresentations and mis-statements has been to withdraw public attention from the most important aspects of our military policy, and to induce Parliament and the public to acquiesce in a series of changes which they would never have accepted or tolerated had the true facts been put before them.





# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I

### VOLUNTEER CREWS FOR DESTROYERS AND TORPEDO-BOATS <sup>1</sup>

#### *Memorandum by the Author*

VIS-À-VIS Germany, this country is at a great disadvantage in case of war in certain respects. Germany possesses an unrivalled army, practically unlimited in numbers, highly trained, and under the most skilful direction. A declaration of war, as a matter of policy, has been accepted by Prussia as legitimate and necessary for over two hundred years. War having been decided on as a matter of policy, preparations are made for the successful conduct of that war, and for its declaration at the most favourable moment. At the present time, moreover, Germany has the advantage of possessing a number of very completely equipped ports, which, for the most part, are inaccessible from the sea. All preparations exist in Hamburg, Brunsbüttel, Bremerhaven, and elsewhere, for the rapid embarkation of troops, and ample transport is always available.

While Germany possesses these undoubted advantages, this country also possesses advantages which should not be overlooked. In the first place, the United Kingdom lies in the direct path of German shipping; all

<sup>1</sup> The First Lord of the Admiralty was good enough to accept a copy of this memorandum.

German vessels must either pass down the Channel, in which case for nearly two hundred miles they are within fifty miles of our coast, or they must expend time and coal in passing round the North of Scotland into the Atlantic.

In the second place, inasmuch as this country cherishes no aggressive designs against Germany, and would be altogether unable to carry such designs into effect if they existed, the conflict between the countries must take the form of an attack upon the United Kingdom by Germany. In other words, the Germans must come to us, and, by doing so, must expose themselves to the full action of the Navy.

Lastly, the United Kingdom has an advantage due to the fact that it possesses, in a higher degree than any other country in the world, a population trained to the sea and following the sea for the love of it. This population is composed of yachtsmen, boat-sailors, &c., and, as will be shown, in time of war there will be added to it a very large number of persons professionally connected with the sea, but who will be out of employment in time of war. At the present time we take practically no advantage of the superiority which the existence of this population may be made to confer. It is suggested that the time has come for taking advantage of it.

The Volunteer movement on land has already attained large proportions. It is not proposed here to discuss the military value of Volunteers raised for military purposes, and whose services are absolutely limited to the soil of the United Kingdom; but one or two observations with regard to the Volunteers are necessary to illustrate the argument.

It may be conceded that the Volunteers, or Territorial Army, furnish evidence of an exceedingly good spirit, and that the Force probably contains the best military material

we possess. At the same time, it is necessary to observe that the officers and men of the Territorial Army must necessarily be 'amateurs.' That is to say, their military exercises must form an interlude only in their ordinary life, and such knowledge of military affairs as they possess must be acquired in addition to, and apart from, their professional work.

It should also be noted that whatever may be the value of the Territorial Army, acting in the field against foreign troops, its value, as long as this country possesses any serious force upon the sea, must be exceedingly small. It is probably true to say that while the history of war affords innumerable instances of a landing being successfully accomplished in face of a military opposition only, there is no recorded instance of a successful landing in face of serious naval resistance. It would seem, therefore, reasonable to consider whether our power of opposing naval resistance to an enemy cannot be increased.

It is suggested that it can be increased by utilising that portion of the population to which reference has been made. There are in this country thousands of men who follow the sea for the love of the sea, who are intimately acquainted with our coasts, with all the tides, channels, harbours, within our territorial waters. In respect of five-sixths of the work which would be required from them in time of war, these men are not amateurs at all. On the contrary, in all such matters as seamanship, pilotage, knowledge of the local waters, freedom from sea-sickness, and boat-handling, they are far ahead of the average of qualification and accomplishment in the Royal Navy. Moreover, these men are for the most part highly intelligent and active persons, alert, enterprising, and accustomed to hardship. At present they are not utilised for the purposes of National Defence. It is suggested that they should be utilised.

But in addition to the yachtsmen and boat-sailors, we have another great source hitherto untouched. In the event of war with Germany thousands of very highly trained men will at once be out of work, viz.—

1. The Officers and Crews of North Sea Packets and Cargo Steamers.
2. The Officers and Crews of all the North Sea and Baltic Sailing Vessels.
3. The North Sea Pilots.
4. A large number of the North Sea Fishermen, especially those frequenting the Dogger Bank.

The men following corresponding occupations in Germany will all be embodied in the German Navy, where their technical skill, local knowledge, combined with the military training they have received, will render them most valuable. Under our present organisation there is no room for any of these men in our own Navy. So absurd, indeed, are our arrangements, that the captain of a cross-Channel mail-boat, a highly educated and intelligent seaman, whose business it is to drive his ship at full speed night and day throughout the year, is actually debarred by the Regulations from receiving a Commission in the R.N.R., because his ship, after the Board of Trade deductions for passenger space have been made, has less than the prescribed tonnage. The captain of a Newcastle nine-knot collier can, however, obtain a Commission.

It is proposed that the opportunity of volunteering for the Naval Defence of the country should be offered to the men comprised in the various categories above named. It should be specially noted that whereas, in the event of war, the vast majority of the officers and men of the Territorial Army would be specially required to

stay at home and carry on their various businesses, the persons to whom it is proposed that an appeal should be made, would be automatically set free on the declaration of war, and would be unable to resume their ordinary occupations until the war was over. It is proposed, therefore, that these men should be asked to volunteer for service in time of war, but that their duties should be different from those of the existing Naval Volunteers. The existing Naval Volunteers, apart from certain special ratings, such as signalmen, perform no very useful function; they are practically told off to do bluejackets' work, and the special qualities which many of them undoubtedly possess do not enable them to perform this work either better or worse than an ordinary bluejacket. Good material is wasted because it is misapplied.

The following scheme is, therefore, proposed. As an initial experiment, one or two of the maritime towns, e.g. Harwich, Hull, Bristol, or Southampton, should be asked to furnish two crews for a Destroyer or first-class T.B.D., the Admiralty undertaking to assign a boat to the selected port. The local corps would be responsible for the care of the boat and for the maintenance of the personnel, with the aid of such grants as the Admiralty might think fit to give. A complete crew would have to turn out for a fortnight for manœuvres in each year, during which time they would receive Admiralty pay and rations, and, as a condition of recognition, they would have to satisfy the Admiralty requirements in respect of drill, signalling, engine-room and stoke-hold control, use of Q.-F. gun and the Whitehead torpedo.

#### OFFICERS

The Commissioned Officers should, in the first instance at any rate, be retired officers of the Royal Navy.



## ENGINE-ROOM AND STOKE-HOLD RATINGS

These can easily be supplied, and to an almost unlimited extent. At Hull, Harwich, Brighton, New-haven, and elsewhere there are hundreds of very competent engineers, mechanics, and firemen; men accustomed to drive, stoke, and supervise the high-pressure engines of fast mail-boats and yachts, and to do heavy repairs in harbour, and who are also experts in all the delicate work of locomotive factories, including the manipulation of the high-pressure air or vacuum cylinders for the Westinghouse brakes.

It is probable that stoke-hold and engine-room crews would have to be paid, but this need present no difficulty. They can be paid on special occasions, as the band of a Territorial regiment is now paid.

## TORPEDO RATINGS

It would probably be necessary to have a certain number of skilled Torpedo men attached to the ports, for the purpose of regulating and keeping in order Torpedoes, but the art of discharging these weapons could undoubtedly be learnt under proper instruction by the men likely to be employed.

## SIGNALLING

There would not be the least difficulty in obtaining any number of very expert signalmen.

Provided that the initial experiment were a success, it could be definitely extended, and there is no reason why a boat should not be stationed in every considerable port. The boats would, of course, be under proper naval control. In the event of war they could rendezvous at any point, and would undoubtedly make the coast unapproachable by an enemy.

It may be objected that the boats would interfere with naval arrangements. This is merely a question of organisation, but it must be remembered that many of the existing Destroyers, for the manning of which provision is made, will in time of war be employed far from the coast. It is certain that in this event pressure will be put upon the Admiralty to furnish something in the nature of coast defence. It is submitted that it could not be more effectively furnished than on the lines proposed.

H. O. A.-F.

22-6-08.

## APPENDIX II

STATEMENT showing the PRINCIPAL ITEMS which account for the REDUCTIONS in the BRITISH ESTABLISHMENTS in the INTERVAL between 1ST OCTOBER 1905 and the 1ST OCTOBER 1908.

## ESTIMATES, 1906-07

*R.G.A.*—Reduction of four companies, and reductions owing to General Slade's Committee.

*Royal Engineers :—*

Reduction of one company and revision of establishment of Fortress Units in connexion with the abolition of Submarine Mining.

Reduction of two companies in the Colonies.

*Infantry :—*

Reorganisation of Infantry depôts on the formation of Record Offices.

Reduction of five battalions of the Royal Garrison Regiment.

## ESTIMATES 1907-08

*Cavalry :—*

Changes in establishment owing to there being two regiments fewer at Home, formation of a provisional depôt, and postponement of the scheme for the formation of two large depôts.

*Artillery :—*

*R.H.A.*—Reduction of one dépôt.

*R.F.A.*—Reduction of three dépôts.

*R.G.A.*—Reduction of three companies, two dépôts, and Regimental District Staff.

Reductions owing to the recommendations of General Owen's Committee.

*Royal Engineers :—*

Reorganisation of Royal Engineer field units at Home.

Reductions owing to recommendations of General Owen's Committee.

Reduction of Brennan Torpedo defences.

*Foot Guards :—*

Disbandment of 3rd Battalion Scots Guards and reduction of Irish Guards by 100 men.

*Infantry of the Line :—*

Reduction of dépôt establishments, and of 30 privates from each of 71 battalions at Home. Reduction of 8 battalions abroad. (74 privates added to each of 25 battalions remaining abroad.)

*Army Service Corps :—*

Disbandment of one company, and reductions at the Remount Dépôt.

## ESTIMATES, 1908-09

*Royal Garrison Artillery :—*

Reduction by 1,000 non-commissioned officers and men.

RETURN showing the STRENGTH of the REGULAR ARMY, SPECIAL RESERVE, and TERRITORIAL ARMY on the 1st October 1908, as compared with the corresponding STRENGTH on 1st October 1905.

### I.—REGULAR ARMY.

(i) STRENGTH ON BRITISH ESTABLISHMENT, EXCLUSIVE OF PERMANENT STAFF OF VOLUNTEER AND TERRITORIAL FORCES, AND OF COLONIAL AND INDIAN TROOPS.

	1st October 1905.			1st October 1908.		
	Officers.	Other Ranks.	Total.	Officers.	Other Ranks.	Total.
Cavalry - - - - -	551	13,195	13,746	538	13,550	14,088
Artillery { Horse and Field	810	19,784	20,594	710	18,073	18,783
{ Garrison - - -	784	18,780	19,564	668	13,454	14,122
Foot Guards - - - - -	305	7,748	8,053	280	7,329	7,609
Infantry of the Line - -	3,220	96,116	99,336	3,069	86,440	89,509
Other Arms - - - - -	2,192	22,538	24,730	2,103	21,156	23,259
Total - - - - -	7,862	178,161	186,023	7,368	160,002	167,370
Establishment - - - -	8,037	181,312	189,349	7,595	161,320	168,915

(ii) RECRUITS JOINED<sup>1</sup> REGULAR ARMY 1ST OCTOBER 1907-8:—37,159, exclusive of Colonial Corps.

<sup>1</sup> The Recruiting Report gives the number of recruits 'joined,' not the number 'attested,' which is rather larger, since some recruits are rejected after attestation and never join their units.

## II.—MILITIA AND SPECIAL RESERVE.

(i) STRENGTH, N.C.O.'s AND MEN, EXCLUSIVE OF PERMANENT STAFF, OR REGULAR ESTABLISHMENT.

—	Militia, 1st October 1905.	Special Reserve, 1st October 1908.
Artillery - -	13,254	9,355
Infantry - -	69,629	50,179 <sup>2</sup>

(ii) RECRUITS AND TRANSFERS TO THE REGULAR ARMY, ALL ARMS.

—	Militia.				1st October 1907 to 1st October 1908.	
	1st October 1903 to 1st October 1904.	1st October 1904 to 1st October 1905.	1st October 1905 to 1st October 1906.	1st October 1906 to 1st October 1907.	Militia.	Special Reserve.
Recruits taken on strength Men enlisted from Militia or Special Reserve for Regular Army. <sup>4</sup>	35,264 14,932	29,941 12,103	28,732 12,409	28,575 12,113	8,242 7,514	17,781 <sup>3</sup> 3,951 <sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The numbers of the Special Reserve will presumably increase substantially during the winter, as recruits are coming in very freely, and the wastage will be small, as the Militiamen who joined will not be time-expired till after April 1909. Consequently, with the exception of the recruits joining the Regular Army, there will be but little efflux as compared with the anticipated heavy influx of recruits.

<sup>3</sup> N.B.—Men could turn over to Regular Army from Militia after 49 days, but no special reservist can do so in any case until after 3 months, and in many cases not till after 6 months.

<sup>4</sup> The numbers given include *all* the men enlisted from the Militia or Special Reserve for the Regular Army irrespective of their period of service in the Militia or Special Reserve.



## (iii) NUMBERS UNDER AGE 20, ALL ARMS.

		Militia, 1st October 1905.	Special Reserve, 1st October 1908.
Under age 20	- - -	23,184	16,244

VOLUNTEERS AND TERRITORIAL FORCE.  
(i) STRENGTH, N.C.O.'s AND MEN, EXCLUSIVE OF PERMANENT STAFF.

		Volunteers, 1st October 1905.	Territorial Force, 1st October 1908.
Artillery	- - -	38,862 <sup>1</sup>	27,896
Infantry	- - -	180,489 <sup>1</sup>	117,729

## (ii) RECRUITS, ALL ARMS.

	1st October 1904 to 1st October 1905.	1st October 1907 to 1st October 1908.
	Volunteers.	Volunteers.
		Territorial Force.
Recruits taken on strength - -	44,104 <sup>1</sup>	18,174
		38,732 <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Including Honourable Artillery Company.<sup>2</sup> Including 1,188 Yeomanry.

STRENGTH of ARMY RESERVE on the 1ST OCTOBER 1905 and  
1ST OCTOBER 1908

Arm.		1st October 1905.	1st October 1908.
Cavalry	-	7,338	8,831
Artillery { Horse and Field	-	7,286	12,981
Garrison	-	4,595	8,727
Foot Guards	-	6,874	8,423
Infantry of the Line	-	59,269	82,206
Other Arms	-	8,980	12,463
Total	-	94,342	133,631
		Increase 39,289	

Attention has already been called (see page 115) to some very serious inaccuracies in the above Return; but the list of errors has not been exhausted. The statement as to the strength of the Special Reserve, appearing as it does without comment or explanation, is misleading in the highest degree. It will be observed that the Special Reserve on the 1st October 1908 is stated to have numbered 59,534. Save in a purely technical sense, this is a mere fancy, for it includes all the men who are merely passing through the Special Reserve on the way to the Regular Army. The officers commanding the depôts know perfectly well that of the men temporarily under their command, a proportion varying from 40 per cent. to as much as 90 per cent. have no more intention of remaining in the Special Reserve than of joining the Salvation Army, and yet every one of these men is included in the official total, and will be included again in the official Return as a Regular soldier with the Colours. A single example out of many which have come under the notice of the writer will suffice to illustrate the deception which is being practised. A battalion has recently been made up to full strength preparatory to departure for foreign service. In order to make it up to strength, numbers of men have been transferred to it from depôts other than its own. Of these, a considerable portion are Special Reservists from a single dépôt. Every one of these men appears in the Return as a Special Reservist, and will appear again—indeed, has already appeared—as a Line Infantryman. And everyone who has had to do with these soldiers has known from the beginning that they had no intention of joining the Special Reserve, and never would join it. Yet once more *populus vult decipi* and a satisfactory total of Special Reservists had to be produced.

Again, it must be remembered that the Special

Reserve at present includes some thousands of Militiamen, who are simply remaining in the Force to complete their term of service, and to earn their bounty. No one studying the Return would become aware from its terms of this important fact.

## APPENDIX III

CIRCULAR TO THE UNEMPLOYED ISSUED BY THE  
WAR OFFICE, OCTOBER 1908

‘IT may be that owing to trade depression the difficulty of providing work will be somewhat acute during the coming winter, and employers of labour, while anxious to retain their men in employment, will find considerable difficulty in employing them during the winter months, owing to slackness of trade. The question is whether the newly-organised Special Reserve can be made use of to provide temporary employment during the winter months. The Militia in the past did not adequately afford the assistance required, as recruits were only drilled on enlistment for 49 days. The substitution of the new arrangements of the Special Reserve may, however, meet the difficulty. The Special Reserve takes recruits for the R.F.A., the R.E., and the Infantry of the Line, and in Ireland for two units of Garrison Artillery. Recruits for these arms are enlisted to train on enlistment for six months, unless the musketry is to be performed immediately prior to the annual training, in which case the actual training on enlistment is reduced to five months. The age for enlistment into the Special Reserve is from 17 to 30 years of age.

‘The pay varies according to the arm of the Service and the age of the recruit, from 7s. a week in the case of

Infantry to 8s. 5½*d.* in the R.A., if the recruit is under 18 years of age; and if the recruit is 18 years of age on enlistment the pay is from 8s. 9*d.* a week in the Infantry to 10s. 2½*d.* in the R.A. On completing the period of drill on enlistment, the recruit receives a bounty of 30s. Afterwards, as stated below, he receives, in addition to his pay, four bounties in each year of £1 each. It will be seen, therefore, that employers of labour can, to a certain degree, remedy the want of employment by advising the younger of their employees to spend the winter in the Special Reserve, and, by this means, obtain the weekly pay mentioned above, in addition to free food, quarters, bedding, fuel and light; while the men, as a rule, will not be so far distant from their homes that it will be impossible for them to return on Saturday afternoon till Sunday evening on leave.

‘The question will be asked for how long the recruit who takes advantage of these terms will be committed. The answer is for six years; six months in the first year, and from 15 to 21 days in each subsequent year. But a recruit in ordinary circumstances is allowed to purchase his discharge at any time for £3. If he remains in the service he receives three non-training bounties of £1 each, payable in October, December, and February, and an annual training bounty of £1.

‘Employers of labour may be afraid that their men may be taken away from them at a busy time, and be called out for annual training. This annual training, however, in the case of the Infantry, lasts only for 21 days, while in the case of other corps it is only 15 days, and, as the dates of training are fixed locally by the general officer commanding the district, the requirements and conditions of each part of the country are studied in connection with the training of its Special Reserve units. Any employer of labour who desires to know more of the



conditions of service in the Special Reserve on behalf of any of his employees, and also the local units in which vacancies exist, can get full information by applying to the nearest recruiting officer or other local military authority.'

## APPENDIX IV

THE TRUTH ABOUT MILITARY OPINION AND THE  
TERRITORIAL ARTILLERY*Correspondence between the Secretary of State for  
War and the Author, in March 1908*2, The Abbey Garden, Westminster,  
30th March 1908.

DEAR HALDANE,—I have postponed writing to you for some days, thinking that you might possibly wish to add something to the answer you gave to a question put by me in the House of Commons on the 18th March. As I have not heard from you, I now ask leave to recur to the subject. You may remember that in the question I asked you, whether, in view of the great importance of the matter to which the question referred (the creation of 196 batteries of volunteer field artillery) you would 'lay upon the table the report of a Departmental Committee, under the presidency of General MacKinnon, Director of Auxiliary Forces, appointed in 1905 to consider the advisability of creating volunteer field batteries, together with the minutes referring to the same by Sir Frederick Stopford, Director of Military Training; Sir Neville Lyttelton, Chief of the General Staff; and the Secretary of State for War, dated respectively September 29, October 6, October 7, October 13, 1905.' Your reply was as follows:—'As regards the last part of the question, I cannot undertake to lay on the table documents,

which refer to discussions which took place between my predecessor in office and his confidential advisers.'

But, though you declared yourself unable to produce the papers asked for, you took occasion on the 19th inst. to give what purported to be the tenour of the most important of them. You stated that in 1905 the Chief of the General Staff had objected to the proposal to utilise the Lanarkshire and the Sheffield Volunteer Artillery on the ground that 'No systematic training on a war footing was proposed for the whole of the volunteers,' leaving it to be inferred that, had such training been proposed, Sir Neville Lyttelton would have been prepared to waive his objection. No statement warranting such a conclusion appears in any of the documents, nor, as far as I am aware, was any such opinion ever expressed by the Chief of the General Staff.

It appears to me that by withholding the papers, and at the same time giving an account of their tenour which their contents do not bear out, you have produced an impression upon the public mind which is not justified by the facts, and have created a situation which is unfair to me. I naturally desire, therefore, to clear up the obscurity which I believe to exist, and I propose, unless you forbid me, to print and circulate the documents referred to in my question. I do not anticipate any refusal on your part. These papers are not, as I think your answer might lead some people to suppose, private communications between myself and the officers concerned; they are printed minutes forming part of the records of the War Office, they were written officially in connection with the report of a departmental committee, and they were the basis of a decision by the Army Council. I note that Lord Portsmouth, when asked to produce the official papers recording the adoption by the Army Council of the policy of creating 196 batteries of

volunteer field artillery, declined to produce them, not because there was any official objection to doing so, but because there were no such papers in existence. A similar difficulty does not arise in the present case. The question of creating volunteer field batteries was very fully and carefully discussed at the end of 1905, and the deliberate opinions of the officers who took part in the discussion were placed on record, not in haste, or for the purpose of being read out in Parliament, but with the full responsibility of their authors, who were called upon to form a decision and to act upon it.

I think that these papers should be circulated in the public interest. You have very frequently cited military opinion in favour of a policy which, whatever may be its merits or demerits, must inevitably have very far-reaching consequences. You have gone farther; you have mentioned by name two of the officers by whom I had the honour of being advised, and whose minutes lie before me. You have actually gone so far as to suggest to the House of Commons that I myself was in favour of the policy which you have now adopted. I do not pretend to know what the views of the distinguished soldiers I have referred to may be at the present time, but I do know what they thought and said as late as October 1905; and I have no hesitation in saying that they were at that time wholly opposed to the policy of reducing the Royal Artillery and of creating 196 batteries of volunteer field artillery. Their views, so far from coinciding with those which you have so often laid before the public as representative of military opinion, involved in fact the exact contradictory of that opinion. As to the suggestion that I myself had changed my frequently-expressed views upon this matter, it is, if I may say so, almost absurd. My views have been on public record at every stage; they have not changed, and certainly

nothing has taken place during the last two years which has been calculated to change them.

I fully admit that as Secretary of State and head of the Department you have a perfect right to forbid the publication of any papers in charge of your Department, and if you withhold your permission I shall act in the future as I have done in the past—I shall neither produce nor quote from any of these minutes. But I think the permission I ask for ought to be accorded, in the first place, because it is desirable that the public should know what military opinion was in October 1905. When this is known it will be a simple process to discover what were the causes which so completely changed it in 1906. In the second place, though this is a much less important matter, I think it is just to me that this publication should take place. If it were the fact that during my tenure of office military opinion had been unanimously in favour of the reduction of the Royal Artillery and the creation of a vast number of volunteer batteries, I might fairly be blamed for not giving effect to this unanimous advice, and for continuing to write and speak as if it had never been tendered. As a matter of fact no such advice ever was tendered, and, as I think you must be aware, it was at my instance that my colleagues consented, somewhat reluctantly I must admit, to make a limited experiment under very special conditions.

The documents which I desire should be made public are the following :—1. Minute by the Secretary of State addressed to the Chief of the General Staff, and dated 29th September 1905. 2. Minute by the Director of Military Training to the C.G.S., dated 6th October 1905. 3. Minute by the C.G.S. to the Master-General of the Ordnance, dated 7th October 1905. 4. Minute by the M.G.O. to the C.G.S., dated 12th October 1905. 5. Proceedings of a Conference held on the 9th November

1905, under the presidency of General MacKinnon, Director of Auxillary Forces. 6. Minute by Colonel May, Assistant Director of Military Training, to the C.G.S., dated 10th November 1905. 7. Minute by the C.G.S. to the Secretary of State, dated 13th November 1905. 8. Minute by the Secretary of State, dated 15th November 1906. 9. *Precis* No. 264, laid before the Army Council.—Believe me, yours truly,

H. O. ARNOLD-FORSTER.

The Right Hon. R. B. HALDANE, K.C., M.P.

War Office, Whitehall, S.W.,

1st April 1908.

DEAR ARNOLD-FORSTER,—I do not think that the proposition which you make to me is one to which I ought to accede. To do so would, in my considered opinion, be undesirable in the public interest. Moreover, at a time when the officers of the new territorial artillery are just taking over their difficult work I think that there had better be a truce to this campaign. Don't you agree? If not, you are at liberty to publish this correspondence.—Faithfully yours,

R. B. HALDANE.

The Right Hon. H. O. ARNOLD-FORSTER, M.P.

2nd April 1908.

DEAR HALDANE,—I am much obliged to you for your letter of the 1st inst. I note that you forbid me to publish the documents to which I referred in my letter of the 30th March, and I confess that in view of the very strong and clear expressions of opinion which they contain I am not altogether surprised at the decision, though I regret it.

You suggest that there had 'better be a truce to this campaign.' If any personal question were at issue,



I would most certainly say 'Yes, by all means,' though I think I should be tempted to add that it would have been better if the truce had come at an earlier stage, and not after all the statements to which I take strong and, as I think, reasonable objection had been made.

But I assure you that to me this artillery question is one of public policy only. From the very outset I have opposed the plan of reducing the Royal Artillery, and making an immense experiment with volunteer artillery, because I believed that such a plan was fraught with great danger to the country. As far as I can ascertain, there is not a soldier in the army who disagrees with me. I should naturally have liked to support this belief by adducing in its favour the carefully considered opinion of every soldier by whom I had the honour of being advised. I was specially anxious to do this, because it appeared to me that there was a serious danger of the public being misled as to the real nature of these opinions. However, you have decided that this opportunity is not to be accorded to me.

But I still hope and believe that the policy to which I object, and which I consider a dangerous one, may be arrested, that the reduction of the Royal Artillery may be stopped, and the creation of territorial field batteries limited to the dimensions of a careful experiment. I therefore accept your permission to publish this correspondence in the hope that it may induce the public to inquire into the real state of military opinion with regard to this artillery question. If this inquiry be made, I am confident that it will reveal the fact that the policy which has now been approved is directly contrary to the opinion and the practice of every nation which has been engaged in war in modern times.—Believe me, yours truly,

H. O. ARNOLD-FORSTER.

The Right Hon. R. B. HALDANE, K.C., M.P.

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